

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Doniz
Chap. Copyright No.

Shelf R4B3

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.





5465.C¹ Bates, Lizzie

THE

7
DUCHESS RENÉE

AND

C.B.
HER COURT.



AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY,
150 NASSAU-STREET, NEW YORK.

DC 112

R4B3

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1872, by the
AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress,
at Washington.

PREFACE.

IT was a suggestion of one keenly alive to the interests of the youth of our land that historical sketches of those who had occupied high places in church and in state, would be a desirable addition to the rapidly growing libraries for the young. Acting upon this suggestion the writer has gathered from various sources all that she could find touching the life and personal experiences of Renée of France. While she gives no references to the authorities consulted, she would have it clearly understood that this work is but a compilation, made in the hope that it may profit the youth of our country to study the character and example of one of whom they could obtain no knowledge, without consulting larger and more expensive works ; a course requiring time and research in public and private libraries.

The writer desires in particular to acknowledge her indebtedness to a very interesting volume by an anonymous author, entitled "Some Memorials of Renée of France, (London, 1859,)" from which she has drawn many entire paragraphs, besides abridging so much as she has found to her purpose.

L. B.



CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

The King and Queen at the Castle of Blois—The Marshal of France—Renée and the Peacocks -----PAGE 7

CHAPTER II.

The Death of Queen Anne—Louise of Savoy—The Marriage of Claude—The Death of Louis ----- 21

CHAPTER III.

Disturbances in Italy—The Ducal Edict—The Marriage of Ercole—Entrance into Ferrara—Renée's Visit to Venice—The Death of Duke Alfonso ----- 28

CHAPTER IV.

Character of Ercole, Duke of Ferrara—The Duke's Visit to Rome—Congratulatory Visit to Charles V., at Naples—Calvin's Stay at Ferrara—Clement Marôt—Learned Men at the Court of Ferrara ----- 44

CHAPTER V.

Academies—Olympia Morata—Fulvio Morato—Curione—The Brothers Sinapi—Distinguished Ladies—The Pope's Visit to Ferrara ----- 54

CHAPTER VI.

Calvin's Letter to the Duchess of Ferrara—The Marriage of Anna d'Este to Francis, Duke of Guise—Olympia Morata banished from Ferrara—The Martyr Fannio, Giorgio Siculo—The Mission of Doctor Oriz ----- 64

CHAPTER VII.

Reconciliation of Alfonso with the Duke—War in Italy—The Marriage of Prince Alfonso—Renée's Kindness to the French Soldiers ----- 85

CHAPTER VIII.

Galeazzo Caraccioli—Calvin's Letter—Religious Persecution in France—Death of Henry II. of France—Death of Ercole, Duke of Ferrara—Renée the Head of State—Renée Returns to France-----	93
--	----

CHAPTER IX.

The Changes wrought in Thirty Years—The Rival Houses of Bourbon and Guise—Continued Persecution in France—La Renaudie's Plan of Revenge—Sympathy of Anne, Duchess of Guise—Correspondence on the Part of Olympia Morata -----	105
---	-----

CHAPTER X.

Convocation of the States-General—The Arrest of Conde—Death of Francis II.—Sir Nicholas Throckmorton --	119
---	-----

CHAPTER XI.

The Triumvirate—Colloquy of Poissy—The Edict of January—The Massacre of Vassy—Montargis—Malicorne	133
---	-----

CHAPTER XII.

Assassination of the Duke of Guise—Coligni, Soubise, and Beza Accused of Complicity—Calvin's Influence—Steps taken by the House of Guise—Calvin's Letter—A Glimpse of Renée's Inner Life -----	154
--	-----

CHAPTER XIII.

Reconciliation of Coligni with the House of Guise—The Marriage of the Duchess Anna to the Duke de Nemours—Death of Calvin—Letter from the Reformed Church at Antwerp—The Arrival of Alva—The Massacre of Orleans-----	165
---	-----

CHAPTER XIV.

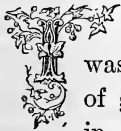
Renée and her Daughter, the Duchess of Nemours—The Princess Urbino—Lucrezia d'Este—Leonora d'Este—Last Days of Renée-----	186
---	-----



THE
DUCHESS RENÉE
AND HER COURT.

CHAPTER I.

The King and Queen at the Castle of Blois—The Marshal of France—Renée and the Peacocks.

T was summer; the Castle of Blois was full of merry-making; the reins of government for the time lay loose in the hands of King Louis; and Queen Anne, although an invalid, drank in health with the air she breathed.

The castle was situated on a slight eleva-

tion in the middle of the park. In the rear vines were planted, and groves of maple-trees, oak-trees, and elms, spread out their rich foliage by the side of aspens, firs, and pine-trees. A massive wall of dark-gray stone completely surrounded the castle-grounds, broken here and there with gates, and overrun in places with bright-hued flowers that filled the air with their fragrance, and formed an agreeable feature in the landscape.

The paths were well kept, the shrubbery presented a pleasing appearance, the birds sang gayly, there were swans and curiously mottled ducks swimming in the moat, and a fountain threw up its high column of water, which came down again in clouds of spray, falling into a marble basin fringed with purple and white lilies.

Under the trees there were placed ornamental tables, settees, and chairs. In one of these sat the king. His dress was plain, but carefully arranged, and his entire bearing showed the easy good-nature of one who receives happiness himself from merely seeing others happy.

Queen Anne reclined in a cushioned arm-chair of ample dimensions. She wore a dress of lavender-colored silk, and her head was covered with a cap of delicate lace, trimmed with ribbon of the same color as her dress. Groups of ladies and gentlemen were promenading under the trees, and a child of three summers was sporting with a small spaniel of spotless white. The action of the child was graceful, but her face was plain and her shoulders were round, as though distorted through suffering. In contrast to this deformity her eyes were bright and her hands and arms perfect. As she danced along the gravelled walk her gleeful laugh rang out and reached the spot where the king and queen sat under the sheltering trees. Conversation between the royal couple had been sprightly; now a sudden silence came over them, as they sat with eyes riveted upon the child in her merry gambols.

Coming out from the vine-covered balcony, a beautiful girl in a full white dress now appeared. She had rich, dark hair, and her face, slightly flushed, beamed with youth and

beauty. She held a half-open letter in her hand, and bowing gracefully to the groups of ladies and gentlemen as she passed, she made her way to the queen's chair.

"It is a brilliant day," said the lady, as she stooped to kiss the hand of the queen. "It is happiness to see my mother able to enjoy it."

"Thanks, dear child, I am infinitely better; and still I cannot deny but I would like to mingle in the merry sports of these young people. To watch Renée in her play is enough almost to make one long to be a child again."

"She is a sweet child, this little sister. But madame, your pardon; here is a letter. Will you have the goodness to read and advise me of the answer it is needful to give."

Leaving the letter in her mother's hand, the Princess Claude turned with an easy grace to the king.

"I am also commissioned with a message from Andrea: the new grounds are in readiness for your majesty's inspection, and he would know your pleasure with regard to them."

“Completed already!” exclaimed the king.
“Surely Andrea is no laggard.”

“A king so good and true to his subjects, is worthy of their love. Andrea seeks to give your majesty a pleasant surprise. Shall we go this evening?”

A rare smile came to the king's lips, as he looked into her bright face, and his hand toyed lovingly with her long curls.

“It was the express command of the king that Blois should be made a scene of enchantment during our stay; relaxation from questions of state is what we need, and our invalid requires continual diversion.”

“A most loving, as well as gracious king,” returned the smiling Claude.

The queen had finished the letter, and sat with heightened color on her cheeks, and the delicate missive crushed in her hand. So much interested in each other, the small party did not perceive that a gentleman drew near, as if to speak to them. Claude was the first to notice him, and waving her hand beckoned him to approach.

“To judge from your majesty's appearance,

one would think the fountain of youth to be found in the vicinity of Blois," said the gentleman, bowing low before the queen, and at the same time courteously lifting her hand to his lips.

"A pleasure that we hardly anticipated, marshal," said the queen, with a smile.

"My duty brought me to Blois, and I could not deny myself the pleasure of paying my respects to your majesties."

"Never more welcome than at present, Marshal de Trivulzio. Pray what news do you bring?" said the king, extending his hand.

"Your majesty's subjects are stirred by no deeper feeling at present, than curiosity to know who is to possess the medal your majesty has had the goodness to have struck."

"And a determination to abide by the motto, '*Perdam Babylonis nomen*'?" asked the king with uncommon warmth.

"Would to God it might be so!" was the simple answer.

Unconsciously the eyes of Marshal de Trivulzio wandered to Renée. Tired of play she had settled down in the arms of her "bonne."

who was singing in a low voice one of her Breton songs. The king's words recalled him.

"No other news, marshal? Your budget is but scanty."

The abstracted look on the face of the marshal was gone, and a quick light shot through his eyes. The king perceived it.

"Rather, I came for news," said the marshal. "Princess Claude was so gracious as to inform me that Count d'Angoulême will be here to-morrow."

"He has sent word to that effect," replied the king, his eyes glowing with tenderness as they rested upon the blushing face of Claude. A spasm of pain shot over the queen's face, but she mastered herself and said nothing. Slight as it was the movement did not escape Marshal de Trivulzio. He had come purposely to see if the queen still felt an aversion to the union of Claude with Francis, the youthful heir to the crown. A scheming, ambitious woman might do much to mar the happiness of a people, intent upon seeing the daughter of their sovereign, by her mar-

riage, still seated upon the throne of her father.

Strictly courteous, the marshal turned with a playful remark to Renée. The charm of his manner was irresistible, for with a timid grace the little princess stepped forward and held up, not her hands, but her lips for a kiss.

The courtiers were filled with suppressed laughter.

“A favor that the princess has never accorded to me,” said the Duke of Bourbon with a low bow.

A grave look settled upon Renée’s face, and she clung still closer to the marshal’s hand.

“An honor that your bâton does not bring. One might almost be tempted to give the half of a duchy for it,” said Count de Berri with a pleasant laugh.

“For all that, our little favorite shall not give you a smile,” exclaimed Madame de Bouchaige, bowing with inimitable grace to the young count, and adding, “I am commissioned by one whom the princess dearly loves, to make known to her royal highness that the

peacocks have arrived. Shall we go to see them? It will be worth while to note how her ladyship will receive them."

"If her majesty is able to walk as far," returned Marshal de Trivulzio turning to the queen's chair.

"You will see how really strong I have grown," said the queen rising.

"Will it not fatigue your majesty?" whispered Claude. "Would it not be as well to have them brought here?"

"It will be an agreeable diversion, child. I cannot bear to mar the happiness of my friends by always being the invalid that I am."

"Dear mother, our only unhappiness is in the dread that you may not always be with us."

The king, a vigorous manly figure, and of noble bearing, waved his hand for the company to advance. Count de Berri offered his arm to Claude. Marshal de Trivulzio looked for his little pet and was surprised to see her mounted on the shoulder of one of the attendants. He bowed politely to Madame de Bour-

bon, and offered his arm. The king and queen followed. The ladies and gentlemen were everywhere conversing merrily, and without restraint.

It was a pleasure to see this fair, royal couple, so stately and noble. In the truest sense the king was the "father of the people," and the qualities of his wife commanded his love, esteem and honor.

The improvements of which the Princess Claude had spoken, consisted of a white marble pavilion, commanding a view of a verdant meadow surrounded with box-trees, with grottoes, and arbors gracefully dispersed among thick copses, pleasant walks, terraces, and lawns.

Before the door of the pavilion two peacocks were pluming themselves. When the king and queen were seated, the courtiers withdrew a little into the background, leaving Renée absorbed in unrestrained delight. Unmindful of royalty, the magnificent creatures arched their necks and trailed their splendid feathers across the velvet lawn; then gracefully turning, gave them a fan-like form,

the brilliant colors catching the sun's rays, and flashing back like diamonds. Admiration was at its height. The little princess clapped her hands, her whole figure was tremulous with joy, her eyes danced, and with childish eagerness she rushed forward to embrace them. The stately creatures were unaccustomed to such familiarity, and half in fear and half in anger, they gave a loud, piercing cry. The effect was instantaneous. Beauty would not compensate for such a hideous voice. Renée hid her face in Suzette's gown, neither could she again be persuaded to go near them.

The queen smiled and turned to the king; but there were tears in her eyes.

"Our poor little Renée is far from being attractive in person, like these gorgeous peacocks; but her eyes show a soul of superior worth, and her conversation will fascinate some whom personal beauty alone would fail to charm."

The king's face evinced the satisfaction that he felt. He pressed the hand of the invalid tenderly, and unconsciously the eyes of each

wandered from Renée to Claude. The latter was beautiful and good, but she would soon go from them, while Renée would be theirs for years to come, and the unfolding of her mind would be a pleasure to compensate for the lack of external beauty.

The windows of the castle were open, and the music of a harpsichord floated out to the pavilion where the king and queen were seated. A sudden silence seized the courtiers; they listened to catch the soft, sweet, and mournfully tender strains.

"Some one," said Claude, "finds the castle empty, and takes this means to recall us."

"No one plays like that but Marguerite de Valois," said Madame de Bourbon. "Let us return at once."

"We must wait their majesties' pleasure," was the answer.

Through the open door a distinguished looking man was seen walking in the direction of the pavilion. He wore the simple dress of a citizen, and the thick hair on his head was as white as the linen he wore round his neck. His eyes were bright as they had

been in youth, and his entire appearance bespoke the man of culture and refinement.

It was the court physician, who now approached the queen.

"Your majesty," he began, "I have already had the honor of pointing out to you the necessity of extreme caution, if you hope to recover the health which you have lost. Rest and perfect calm are the chief requisites; and I see by the flush on your cheeks that your mind has been agitated unwisely.

The king looked at the queen and sighed heavily.

"Do not distress yourself," said the queen, with an effort to be gay. "It is the heat that gives the color to my cheeks. Roddi is too careful of me. I really feel quite strong, and the happiness I have enjoyed will make me long for it again."

"A pleasure that your majesty can look forward to, if prudent," answered the physician, with a bow. "In the meantime let me entreat you to return to the castle, where music and the society of a dear friend await you."

The king spoke a few words to his wife, then offering her his arm, together they left the pavilion.

“‘Music, and the society of a dear friend!’ I am at a loss to know who it may be,” said the queen in a low tone.

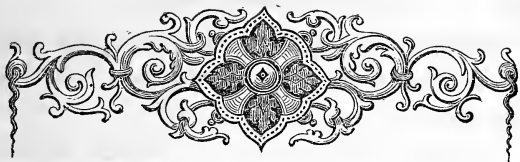
Princess Claude had been walking with the court physician. Now she quietly slipped from his side to whisper into her mother’s ear.

“The friend is Marguerite de Valois. Will it please you to see her at once, or are you too much fatigued?”

A flush of beauty brightened the face of the fair child. The mother’s lip trembled, and she leaned heavily on the arm of the king.

“You tremble; you are ill, dear mother,” continued Claude.

“No, no; not ill, as long as you are left to me, Claude. Marguerite de Valois! Yes, I will see her immediately,” and hastening, the king and queen entered the castle.



CHAPTER II.

The Death of Queen Anne—Louise of Savoy—The Marriage of Claude—The Death of Louis.

DELIGHTFUL as was the summer at Blois, it was the last that Queen Anne was permitted to spend there. As the days deepened into autumn, the good queen saw that she must be separated from her daughters, and with the wise aspiration for Renée, that as she grew to womanhood the superior cultivation of her mind might compensate for any deficiency in personal charms, she chose Madame de Soubise, a Breton lady, and one of her former maids of honor, to conduct the education of her younger daughter when she herself should be no more. "The important trust was well bestowed, duly appreciated, and faithfully discharged." Madame de Soubise was no ordi-

nary woman. Gifted with an intellect of a high order, she had received the best instruction that the age could afford, and her manners were as pleasing as her intelligent conversation was profitable. She had embraced the reformed doctrine, so that Renée's religious predilections in later years were no doubt to be attributed in part to the early lessons of her teacher.

In the character of Anne of Bretagne, we find superior intellectual attainments, a most affectionate nature, and the noblest virtues allied to faults the most opposite. With noble aspirations after what was great and good, Anne was haughty, ambitious, and vindictive. Her ambition was rebuked by the death of one son after another, until she had the bitterness of knowing that the throne of France must pass to the son of Louise of Savoy, Duchess of Angoulême, a woman whom she hated.

Stung to the heart by this unwelcome certainty, Queen Anne employed the energies of her mind in forming brilliant matrimonial projects for her daughters. Before Claude

had attained her second birthday, she was affianced to Charles of Austria, an infant of nearly the same age as herself. But her more prudent husband, Louis XII., saw at a glance that France would be ruined by the dismemberment to which such a step would inevitably lead, and Claude was betrothed, not to Charles, but to Francis, son of the Count of Angoulême and Louise of Savoy. The natural kindness of the king permitted Anne to delay the marriage, but she never overcame her aversion; and could she have foreseen the misery of Claude's wedded life, more persevering than ever would have been her efforts to prevent that unhappy union.

The failure of her plans for Claude, however, did not check the mother's ambition. True, Renée was eleven years younger than her sister, and a deformed child; but her intelligence made one forget that the single gift of beauty was not hers. Scarcely had Renée seen three summers, before the queen prevailed upon Louis to transfer to his future son-in-law his claims on Milan, Asti, and Genoa, as the dowry of Renée in the event

of her marriage with either the Archduke Charles, or his younger brother Ferdinand. Such were the plans of Anne of Bretagne, even while the shadow of death was upon her. She died at Blois when Renée was but four years old; with her last breath committing both of her children to the care of Louise of Savoy.

This step, which at first seems contradictory to the very nature of Anne, shows the deep insight of the woman, as well as the all-absorbing love of the mother. Would not this confidence win upon the better nature of the woman who was destined to become the mother-in-law of Claude, and thus avert her malice from the unoffending children of her former enemy? However this may be, it is certain that both Claude and Renée found a faithful friend in the daughter of Louise, Marguerite de Valois.

A few months after the death of the queen, Claude was married to Francis, who, as Louis XII. survived his wife but a year and a day, succeeded to the throne on the first of January, 1515.

Under the care of "Good Queen Claude," and the wise teaching of Madame de Soubise, Renée, now an orphan, improved rapidly; and so far from her personal plainness proving an obstacle to her being sought after in marriage, she numbered in her list of suitors the most celebrated men of the age. We have seen that she was contracted to the Archduke Charles during her father's lifetime. This arrangement having been set aside, Ferdinand was next spoken of. Charles, Duke of Bourbon, followed, and, it was said, he had some prospect of success. But princes and princesses cannot choose for themselves. Francis' consent was not to be won, and the hatred of Louise having been excited against the Duke of Bourbon, another alliance must be sought.

Queen Claude was a loving sister; but she had much to endure in the neglect of her husband, and before the completion of her twenty-fifth year, she died in the arms of Renée, July 26, 1524. To the sensitive child it was a severe bereavement, but Renée mourned not alone. The burghers and people of

France long revered her as their "Good Queen Claude," and even the heart of Francis was touched into pity. Kings have no time to weep. Francis was on his way to Italy when he heard of his wife's illness. He paused at Bourges until all was over, and then prepared for the realization of his dream of conquest in northern Italy.

All this time Princess Renée was being disposed of much as a piece in a game of chess. Henry VIII. of England meditating a divorce from Catherine of Aragon, was not withheld by any considerations of delicacy from soliciting the hand of Marguerite de Valois, the now widowed Duchess d'Alençon. The personal friend of Catherine, Marguerite did not hesitate long in rejecting the royal suitor; whereupon the monstrous king dared to make an offer for the youthful Renée—a proposition which, strange to say, found some favor in the eyes of Louise of Savoy.

It was, however, the struggle of Francis I. against the emperor in Italy, that decided the marriage destiny of Renée. Alfonso I., Duke of Ferrara, had thus far been on the side of

Charles V. An hereditary vassal of the See of Rome, he had been driven by the unjust animosity of Popes Julius II. and Leo X., to take up arms in his own defence, and had maintained against them a long and exhausting warfare. It was deemed expedient to win him from the emperor, and the allies rewarded his compliance by promising him the investiture of the Duchy of Ferrara, so long withheld by the court of Rome, and with it the hand of the Princess Renée in marriage to his eldest son, Ercole d' Este.





CHAPTER III.

Disturbances in Italy—The Ducal Edict—The Marriage of Ercole—Entrance into Ferrara—Renée's Visit to Venice—The Death of Duke Alfonso.

THE reformed religion had not only reached Italy, but its principles were extensively diffused at different courts, and especially at Ferrara. The erudition and energy with which German writers treated theological subjects, were extremely attractive to Italian scholars. The study of Greek facilitated the examination of Scripture, and the cultivation of the intellect prepared the way for a fuller comprehension of the high prerogative which God has conferred on man as an immortal being. The learned studied the gospel in its original tongue, commented with critical accuracy on difficult passages, and soon became convinced that the grandeur and simplicity of the Christian religion had

been debased and obscured by the inventions of man.

In Modena, we find that Paolo Ricci, a Sicilian monk and a doctor in theology, began secretly to read and expound the epistles of St. Paul, and to unfold the doctrines of the Scriptures. A powerful interest was awakened; both men and women began to converse in private and in public, about faith and the necessity of a new birth. But the papal power, true to its traditionary dread of free discussion on the oracles of God, contrived to arrest the illumination by persuading the Duke of Ferrara to have Ricci arrested and confined in the castle of Modena.

About this time there were various disputes between the monks of the different religious orders, who went so far as to inveigh against each other from the pulpit. Their conduct was so irregular, that the governor thought it his duty to report their proceedings to the Duke of Ferrara. An order was issued in consequence, forbidding any monk to mount the pulpit without the permission of the vicar-general of the diocese.

The news of the religious disturbances at Modena soon reached the ears of the pontiff. It was the first impulse of the pope to fulminate an excommunication against such of the Modenese as had openly declared their heretical opinions; but Cardinal Sadoletto, himself a native of Modena, used every effort to allay the irritation and to bring forward measures of conciliation. Notwithstanding this, the pope wrote to the Duke of Ferrara requesting him to cite the members of the Academy to Rome, Bologna, or Ferrara; and, but for Sadoletto's exertions in favor of his fellow-citizens, more severe measures would have been taken.

Next followed a ducal edict, by which it was forbidden to keep any heretical books in the house, or to dispute either in public or in private about religion, under the penalty of a fine of a hundred crowns of gold, or four strokes of the whip for the first offence; for the second, two thousand crowns of gold and banishment; for the third, a complete confiscation of property and a cruel death.

Never, during the long wars waged by the

Duke of Ferrara, did he issue so oppressive a law. The Academy took the hint, and dispersed. The most sincere reformers escaped to other lands, where they openly professed the gospel; the lukewarm remained and conformed.

The history of the Modenese Academy presents a scene of the struggle which was going on throughout Italy between intellect and bigotry: the phantom of spiritual power terrifying through temporal oppression; the hearts of the people vacillating between hope and despair; scholars studying in secret; braving the pope, or flying to distant countries for that protection denied them in their own.

The marriage of Ercole, the son of Alfonso I., with Renée of France, brought great rejoicing to the Protestant cause; for it introduced into Italy a princess acquainted with the Scriptures and accustomed to reverence their divine authority. While striving to secure as his ally the Duke of Ferrara, Francis had not given a thought to the danger that might accrue to his sister on account of her

religious faith. The Duke of Ferrara was not more considerate; or, perhaps, he failed to comprehend that a young princess, hardly emerged from childhood, could have any definite opinions of her own with respect to religion.

Be this as it may, we find Ercole d'Este, the young heir of the Duke of Ferrara, setting out for France. This was a great alliance for the son of a petty Italian prince. Renée was interesting by her youth, and in addition to her illustrious parentage, she was endowed with every good gift, except that of personal beauty. Her original powers had been developed by severe study. Nor was she less distinguished for her moral excellence; in her noble nature were combined purity of motive and generosity of heart. Her charities flowed freely to the needy, the desolate, and the oppressed. As for her deportment, it was as courteous as it was majestic; she knew how to preserve the respect due to her rank, while she won all hearts by the modesty of her bearing, and the charm of her conversational powers.

The young Ercole was cordially welcomed by Francis, and so favorably did he impress the French court, that in less than two months the marriage was celebrated with great pomp and splendor, June 28th, 1528. The Duke of Ferrara sent the bride a rich present of jewels. Ercole took the title of Duke of Chartres.

The newly-married couple were prevented from proceeding immediately to Ferrara, by the plague which was raging there. Since the sack of Rome, famine and disease had prevailed in Italy. Famine had been forestalled by the provident care of Duke Alfonso, who had imported large quantities of corn; but for the pestilence no effectual remedy was known. Moreover, it brought with it such appalling terror, that many died from alarm. Twenty thousand are said to have perished during the summer months. As autumn deepened, the virulence of the disease began to abate. The streets of Ferrara were well nigh depopulated, and the remaining inhabitants were plunged in the deepest dejection. The duke was unwearied in his efforts to calm and soothe the public mind; bells were forbidden

to be tolled for the dead, incense was burned, perfumes inhaled, and medicated oil used freely.

On the first of November, Ercole and his royal bride prepared to leave Paris for Italy. Renée was accompanied by her governess Madame de Soubise, and her governess' daughter, Anne de Parthenai, an accomplished and Christian maiden, as well as by more than a dozen young ladies of rank, dressed in the costume of the French court.

Alfonso, in honor of his son's bride, gave orders that all mourning should be laid aside. Families which had quitted the city at the time of the plague were encouraged to return. The markets were again held, the churches opened, the professors and students of the university reassembled, and everything was done to give the afflicted city an air of cheerfulness and joy.

The duke, accompanied by the chief nobles, went as far as Reggio, to meet the bridal procession. On the twelfth of November Renée entered Modena. She was received at the gate of St. Agostino under a rich canopy, by

the clergy and people. Mounted on a stately Spanish barb, she rode between the duke and her young brother-in-law, Ippolito, archbishop of Milan. Her husband accompanied her on horseback, and they went in procession to the cathedral. Several days were passed in receiving entertainments and exchanging presents.

But the splendor of Renée's reception at Modena was nothing compared with the pomp and magnificence of her entry into Ferrara. Renée was first conducted to the Belvidere, a beautiful villa which Alfonso had built on a triangular island in the Po, close under the walls of Ferrara. This villa was a magnificent palace, of admirable architecture and vast extent. It was the spot the duke loved best of all his domain. There he retired to meditate plans of defence and security, and to snatch a moment's repose from the burdens of state. The chapel was painted by Rossi and Dossi, two famous artists of the day, and the place was surrounded by gardens of great beauty, in which was collected everything which could soothe the senses and

charm the eyes. Here were shady walks, groves, parterres, gushing fountains, and inviting paths which led by an easy descent to the river. The rarest plants and richest fruit-trees grew in abundance. Part of the island was stocked with a variety of animals; birds of every kind, both wild and tame, flitted from bough to bough, and found there a peaceful shelter. Everywhere the grounds were tastefully laid out in a picturesque style not common in Italy.

From this charming retreat, Renée was rowed in a superb "bucentoro" on the Po, to the city of Ferrara. A crown of gold was on her head, and her dress glittered with the richest jewels. Entering by the gate of St. Paolo, under a splendid canopy, with cannon booming and bells ringing in token of rejoicing, she was carried in a chair through the principal streets, which were draped with the national colors—red, white, and green cloth. In her train walked eighty noble pages dressed in crimson jackets, wearing rose-colored caps with white feathers, and bearing red wands in their hands.

The bridal party was preceded by the clergy and the learned men, and followed by the nobility. At the cathedral the young couple received the nuptial benediction from the bishop of Commacchio, and the Castellano presented to the bride the keys of the city upon a silver salver. The procession now directed its way to the Este palace, which was beautifully adorned with costly tapestry, heirlooms of the house of Este. The sounds of mourning were hushed, while public spectacles and magnificent entertainments celebrated the arrival of the young princess of France at the court of Alfonso.

It is possible that the Ferrarese courtiers, who remembered the surpassing beauty of their former duchess, Lucrezia Borgia, may have been struck with a painful sense of contrast when they first looked upon Renée. The daughter of Louis XII., however, speedily disappointed their expectations; conciliating their esteem by the purity of her character, and winning their affections by her affability and grace. It was soon felt that, though the charm of personal beauty had been with-

held from Renée, the want was compensated by the rare attainments of her mind.

As soon as the festivities in honor of her arrival in Ferrara were over, Renée's literary tastes began to develop. The court quickly became the seat of learning and the home of learned men. Science received an impulse which it maintained in Ferrara during many brilliant years. Professors and scholars of the university who had been scattered far and wide, were recalled by an edict of Alfonso, and that famous seat of learning, under the patronage of Renée, fast recovered its former lustre.

Living in a Roman-catholic country, and the wife of a Catholic prince, Renée had great difficulties to overcome, and many hard trials to encounter. Greatly attached to her governess, Madame de Soubise, she was thoroughly acquainted with the views of the reformers, while her mind was filled with Scriptural truth, and her heart permeated with Divine love.

When Renée left France persecution had already begun, for the reformed doctrines had

taken deep root. The venerable Le Fèvre d'Estaples had spoken words of peace from the gospel. Briçonnet, the liberal bishop of Meaux, was in correspondence with the Duchess d'Alençon. And her mother, Louise, listened to some of the enlightened preachers of Meaux. Francis, indeed, was not as tolerant. Marguerite's influence, however, was strong; for when the Chancellor Du Prat obliged Le Fèvre to fly, Marguerite declared herself his friend, and procured him the appointment of tutor to one of the king's sons. Not only this; it was Marguerite's influence that enabled Le Fèvre to bring out a French translation of the New Testament, a copy of which Renée carried with her to Italy.

The Duke of Ferrara, although more of a warrior than a scholar, took great delight in the society of learned men. The great poet Ariosto was often invited to his table, and employed by him on important missions. Notwithstanding the patronage of the duke, Ariosto did not enjoy that tranquillity and freedom from care which are desirable for the cultivation of the muses. The poet was

a very absent-minded man; and we are told that when he was living at Carpi he went out one morning in his slippers to take a walk; absorbed in thought, or in composition, he continued walking until he found himself half-way to Ferrara, before he discovered his mistake.

Renée, with her bright, childlike ways, was very fond of the poet, conversing with him by the hour, and doing what she could to favor his love of study and meditation. Tasso, the father of Torquato Tasso, was also a member of the ducal family.

Duke Alfonso was a patron of the fine arts, especially painting, and added to the Este gallery several fine pictures of Titian. He understood music, delighted in architecture, and was a thorough judge of arms and falconry.

The birth of the eldest child of Renée and Ercole took place on the 16th of November, 1531. The infant was a daughter. Nevertheless the old duke was pleased to accept it with favor, and even besought Pope Clement VII. to act as sponsor. The pope

knew not how to refuse, but he chose as his proxy for the occasion Cardinal Ippetito de Medici, who, on his part, also selected a deputy in Francesco Guicciardini, the governor of Bologna. Alfonso said nothing, and Renée's scant reverence for the papal court was sensibly diminished. The sacred rite was performed at Ferrara with great splendor, the infant receiving the name of Anna in memory of her grandmother, Anne of Bretagne.

The name of Renée stands first in the list of patrons of a charitable institution established at Ferrara during a period of famine. The preaching of a zealous Dominican had called the attention of the wealthy to the wants of the poor, and the result was the founding of the "Monte delle Farine," dedicated to St. John, to which they appropriated a mill in furtherance of the objects of charity. Renée's patronage of this benevolent undertaking won her a place in the hearts of her subjects, and blinded them to what in another would have been alleged as heresy.

Two years afterwards we find Ferrara re-

joicing over the birth of a prince, who was named Alfonso, after the duke, his grandfather.

The spring following, "Renée, greatly desiring to visit Venice, set out from Ferrara with a goodly number of ladies and horses, and went up to Francelino on a long barge, all covered with brocade and cloth of gold, followed by a barge like unto it, but covered with crimson-colored satin, and by many other barges. Thus went she towards Chioggia, when she was met by the nobility of that city, with a quantity of smaller boats; and to do honor to such a noble stranger, races and maritime games were enacted in those waters, at the sight of which Madama and all took great pleasure, and highly praised the inventor of such pleasant diversions. And so going onward, they were met at Malamocco by the doge and all the signoria, and with sounds of trumpets, pipes, and drums. After disembarking with rejoicings, she was conducted to Venice, where she stayed some days in divers palaces."

Paul III., a member of the Farnese family,


who succeeded Pope Clement, had been greatly benefited by the Borgias, with whom the Duke Alfonso was connected by marriage, and under his pontificate the duke looked forward to years of tranquillity. But just as he obtained the repose he had so long sought, he was seized with an illness which from the first he felt assured would be his last. His forebodings proved true, for he died a few days after Renée's return from Venice, expressing resignation to the will of God, but to the inexpressible grief of his people, who felt that they would never find another such prince.





CHAPTER IV.

Character of Ercole, Duke of Ferrara—The Duke's Visit to Rome—Congratulatory Visit to Charles V., at Naples—Calvin's Stay at Ferrara—Clement Marôt—Learned Men at the Court of Ferrara.

ERCOLE II., the husband of Renée, succeeded his father as Duke of Ferrara. He is described as "a prince of fine presence, above the ordinary stature, of grave speech, yet, withal, pleasant, splendid, magnanimous, clement." He was devoted to his religion, not only building churches, but aiding in the foundation of conventual establishments, and introducing foreign religious fraternities into Ferrara. He was kindly disposed towards his subjects, but his love of splendor and his desire for peace led him to adopt a policy of unworthy compliances. Spending little upon the operations of war, he squandered treasure on the pageants of a

day ; while his piety soon assumed the form of bigotry that spared in its exercise neither his subjects nor the partner of his ducal state.

The late duke, just before his death, purposed sending Ercole to Rome on a congratulatory mission ; but now that he had become a sovereign prince, it was a still greater compliment for him to pay the pope a visit in person. Accordingly he set out, accompanied by a splendid retinue of young nobles, superbly dressed in vests embroidered with gold, and wearing massive gold chains. Their pages and footmen were all in velvet liveries. In their train were a number of trumpeters and musicians, who travelled in wagons and on mules.

When they entered Rome they were greeted with the sound of martial music, and the guns were fired from the castle of St. Angelo. The pope's guard, the cardinals, and the ambassadors went out in procession to meet the young Duke of Ferrara. The splendor of the pageant made a sensation in Rome, and brought the entire population into the streets.

But this welcome reception did not expedite the object of his visit. When Ercole asked the pope to ratify the decision of Charles V., in favor of the dukes of Ferrara, the cardinals made difficulties and took time to consider. Weary of this delay, Ercole employed the interval in paying, at Naples, a congratulatory visit to the Emperor Charles, who had just returned from his victorious expedition to Tunis, and who willingly gratified the duke by a renewal of the imperial investiture.

We find Renée at this time not only the centre of a brilliant court, surrounded by learned men who delighted in her favor, but a careful Christian mother, ordering her household, and caring as a woman for the interest of all with whom she had to do.

To her list of friends Renée now added the young reformer, John Calvin. She had made his acquaintance during her visit to Venice, and soon after her return he came in disguise to Ferrara to pay the duchess a visit. Arriving in company with Louis du Tillet, brother of the canon of Angoulême, the two Frenchmen were presented to the duke as

travellers visiting the courts of Italy. Calvin had assumed the name of Charles d'Espeville, his own name being too well known as the champion of heresy.

The reformer's heart yearned over the classic land of Italy, and leaped within him at the joyful promise which it offered of being won over to the Gospel. Knowing Renée's piety and her favorable disposition towards the reformers, he indulged the hope that her court might become a centre, as well as a refuge, for those who were desirous of seeing the church undergo a reformation so complete as to restore it to its primitive purity and simplicity. His visit was well timed, for his acute and sagacious mind knew well that the favor of the new pope would possibly be more perilous for gospel doctrine than the former enmity of the papal see.

Calvin had just finished his immortal work, "L'Institution Chrétienne," a book which proves him to have been gifted with those rare endowments which divine Providence from time to time bestows on the few, who are born to influence mankind and lead them

to higher measures of spiritual and intellectual knowledge. Such minds teach us to adore the Creator's power, and give us a sensible foretaste of heavenly communion. If such excellence can exist here below, what must be the range and vigor of faculties exalted by converse with angels?

We can imagine the exquisite pleasure Renée must have experienced, as she sat surrounded by her children and her intimate friends, and drank in words of wisdom as they fell from the lips of Calvin; now discoursing of Christian faith, and revealing to them more and more the wonderful beauty of God's word, now teaching them that their hearts must not prove a fortress, but a treasure-house, from which they were to dispense to others the knowledge of the grace they themselves had received.

About the time of Calvin's visit we find mention made of the arrival of another French exile—Clement Marôt, "the prince of poets, and the poet of princes." At the court of Ferrara he was appointed to the secretaryship made vacant by the withdrawal of Ber-

nardo Tasso. Favored with the patronage of Renée, and the friendship of Calvin, his eyes were opened, at least in part, to the beauty of scriptural truth, and for a time his heart was won. While at the court of Ferrara, the poet conceived the idea of a metrical version of the Psalms. Fifty of these he rendered into French verse, and they were published at Geneva, with a preface by Calvin. But all of this profited little. The love of pleasure blighted the effect of scriptural truth upon the heart of the poet. His creed witnessed against his life, and it is a matter of regret that his name was ever connected with the sacred cause of the Reformation, and that Renée should have honored one so undeserving.

Thus far we have seen little to sadden the life of the duchess; but the storm was gathering. The result of the duke's conference with Charles V., at Naples, was seen, not long after his return, in the renunciation of the interests of France in favor of those of the pope. Painful as this change of policy must have been to the duchess, she was des-

tined to meet with a more grievous trial ; for the noble-minded Madame de Soubise, the guardian and instructor of her childhood, together with the French ladies of her court, were dismissed, and their places were filled with Italians.

Calvin still lingered ; but the court of Ferrara was no longer a safe place for so distinguished a heretic. The private meetings for prayer and reading the Scriptures came to the ears of the duke, and Renée was deprived of a friend from whose faithful instruction in scriptural truth she had learned much.

The absence of the dearly-loved friends of her youth, especially Madame de Soubise and her daughter, with whom she had from a child shared every sentiment of her heart, must have been a severe test to the duchess ; but her children were of an age to demand much of her time, and in their care and instruction she endeavored to find comfort and solace. Not exclusively confined to her family, she sought out Italian ladies who were either favorable to reform, or of such liberal opinions that they were open to conviction.

Among these we find Vittoria Colonna, widow of the celebrated Marquis of Pescara. This lady was conspicuous for her virtues and talents, and for her early bias towards the doctrines of the reformers. The esteem in which Renée held the marchioness may be inferred from the fact of her being one of the sponsors of the infant Leonora d'Este, the youngest daughter of the house of Ferrara.

Besides the animated and intellectual companionship of the ladies of her court, the duchess was surrounded by learned Italians of great talent. The princes of Ferrara had always been distinguished patrons of literature. Ferrara was not only famous for the superior talents of its literary men, but for the scientific knowledge of its professors of medicine. Giovanni Mainardi and his distinguished pupil, Antonio Brasavola, were the renovators of medical science. The latter read dialectics in the university at eighteen, and at twenty sustained arguments at Padua and Bologna relating to theology, philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and belles-lettres. This universal genius was a great fa-

vorite at court. He was appointed chief physician to Ercole, and accompanied him to France when he went thither for his bride. His favorite studies were botany and medicine. He had a splendid collection of rare plants, and he enriched the Italian *materia medica* by many new remedies.

Besides eminent scientific and medical men, we find at the ducal court of Ferrara the poet Gregorio Giraldi, who, after struggling with poverty far from his own country, was at length obliged to return without having improved his fortunes. He was at Rome when the city was taken by the constable of Bourbon, and lost everything he possessed, including his books, which were indeed his chief treasure. A man of profound attainments, both duke and duchess welcomed him to Ferrara with every show of esteem and practical kindness.

Another distinguished visitor who added brilliancy to the court was Celio Calcagnini, a canon of the cathedral, whose early life had been spent in camps. Exchanging war for diplomacy, and finally adopting the ecclesias-

tical habit, he won celebrity as “one of the most learned men of the sixteenth century.” He was one of the first asserters of the earth’s rotation on its axis, a circumstance which better entitles him to distinction than his catalogue of the medals in the museum of the duke, or than his easy and elegant verses.





CHAPTER V.

Academies—Olympia Morata—Fulvio Morato—Curione—
The Brothers Sinapi—Distinguished Ladies—The Pope's
Visit to Ferrara.

THE literary taste of Ferrara manifested itself in a superabundance of academies with quaint titles. The learned Celio was a supporter of one of these—the “Elevati.” After his death it decayed, but was finally revived under a different name. Bartolomeo Ricci, in a letter to the son of Celio, congratulates him on opening this academy in the country, describes the meetings of its members, their walks together, and their learned discourses with each other, and bemoans himself that he cannot leave the city to enjoy their society.

The academy called “Ferrarese” flourished at a later period under Torquato Tasso, who

delivered the opening oration, in which occur these words :

“ Here we neither desire nor aspire to anything but to cultivate our intellects, and mature the seeds of virtue and learning which our mother Nature has so lavishly scattered among us. Here each will seek to sharpen his wit, to refine his judgment, to exercise his memory, and make it the receptacle of the precious treasures of knowledge and science. Here the tongue will be accustomed to express with grace the ideas which the mind has first conceived and apprehended.”

The youthful family of Ercole II. and Renée of France was rendered complete by the birth of another son. The customary service of the Romish church was performed on St. George's day, in the cathedral, by the Bishop Ghillino, with much pomp. The prince, borne in the arms of the Cardinal di Monte, in the name of the pope, received the name of Luigi, after his maternal grandfather, Louis XII. of France.

Chroniclers have justly praised the duchess for the zeal with which she directed the

minds of her children in those studies which she had pursued with enthusiasm in her own early youth, and which were still the solace of her existence. Her eldest daughter, the princess Anna, already rewarded the care which had been bestowed upon her by her teachers. But companionship is necessary for the full development of one's powers, and Anna had neither sister nor friend to share her studies. Remembering how slow her own progress would have been without association with the brilliant Anne de Parthenai, the duchess sought to supply the defect by the choice of a suitable companion for the princess Anna. She found her fondest wishes realized in Olympia Fulvia Morata. Olympia was five years older than the young princess; but notwithstanding the difference in age, a friendship sprang up between them, the harmony of which, although at a later date disturbed, was never wholly destroyed.

Olympia was the daughter of Fulvio Morato, whose name was duly honored in the universities of northern Italy, and she had enjoyed from her infancy the rarest advanta-

ges of education in her refined though humble home.

The Estense palace was a welcome refuge to Olympia from the uncongenial occupations which had proved a barrier to her progress in knowledge. The kind-hearted duchess regarded the child as next to her own; and in the society of Anna d'Este, Olympia advanced rapidly in classical learning, while her native talents of improvisation, composition, and recitation were every day developed.

It followed as a matter of course that one so richly endowed by nature and education became an object of attraction to the learned who thronged the court of Ferrara, and that they did not conceal their admiration. The father of Olympia was likewise a resident of Ferrara, and a strong attachment sprang up between him and the good Curione, who had been in such peril from embracing the reformed opinions. The similarity of their literary studies and the identity of their religious opinions were endearing bonds of union, while Morato loved Curione in an especial manner for having imparted to him heavenly treasures.

Assiduously as literature was cultivated at Ferrara, there were not a few who sought a still higher learning. Calvin's visit and instruction had not been without fruit. Besides the accomplished Anne de Parthenai, who was as devout as a Christian as she was accomplished as a woman, there was a young Italian lady, Francesca Bucyronia, who was so impressed by the reformer's preaching that she began to read the Scriptures and to study them with great earnestness. She was greatly assisted in her search after truth by the conversation of two brothers from Germany by the name of Sinapi.

John and Chilian Sinapi were Lutherans. Attracted by the fame of the university of Ferrara, they entered that institution themselves as students, and were employed by the duchess to instruct her daughter in Greek. The ladies of the court had an opportunity of sharing in the instruction given to the princess Anna, and in turn the tutors as well as the pupils listened to Calvin, and became more spiritually enlightened under his teaching.

There were yet other ladies whose names

must not be forgotten—Lavinia della Rovere, wife of Paolo Orsini, and Donna Madelina, and Donna Cherubina of the same distinguished family. These ladies not only gave lustre to Renée's court by their beauty and their varied accomplishments, but the charm of spiritual excellence was seen in their conversation, and the crowning grace of piety lent a beauty that time could not efface.

We have seen the friendship between Fulvio Morato and Curione. We have now to speak of the refined pleasure that Olympia felt in the conversation and companionship of Lavinia della Rovere. Both were capable of a high degree of intellectual enjoyment, and both, amidst everything calculated to divert their minds from serious thought, had been enabled to set their faces heavenward. "I know not," says Olympia, in speaking of her friend, "a more learned, or, what is still higher praise, a more pious woman in Italy."

Though the opinions of the duchess were decided, and her leaning to reform manifest, yet she was obliged, from considerations for her husband and his new alliance with the

pope, to conform outwardly to many practices which her conscience disapproved.

The reconciliation of the house of Este with the pope, on the accession of Paul III., was publicly solemnized by the visit which he paid to the court of Ferrara. "He embarked at Brescello in a large bucentoro, all adorned with gold, sent thither by the duke, with very many other barques. Two miles below Bondeno the duke met him with sixty carriages, and thence conducted him to the most beautiful Belvedere palace, where, with part of his suite, the pontiff passed the night, and dined the following day within sight of the city.

"The day after his arrival at this magnificent retreat, the pontiff, with his suite of three thousand, including eighteen cardinals and forty bishops, besides several foreign ambassadors, together with the court of the duke and the nobility of the state, made his public entry into Ferrara, passing over the bridge of St. George, which was ornamented and overhung with rich draperies, after the fashion of a hall. And there, at the gate of the city, Prince Alfonso, the eldest son of the duke,

attended by a company of eighty noble youths, all dressed alike, wearing stockings of rose-colored cremisine, with giupponi of light silk stuff of the same color, and with coats of similar velvet, woven with golden threads, presented the pope with the keys of the city in a gold salver, and, after reciting a brief oration, kissed the feet of the pontiff; who, in reply, charged him to keep those keys, saying that they were in good hands; and then giving the prince his benediction, he kissed his forehead.

“Then commenced the procession, and through streets superbly adorned with tapestries, pictures, and hangings of various colors, the brilliant pageant moved along, the pope being seated on high, under a lofty canopy of gold and brocade silk, and preceded by the duke on foot, until graciously bidden by the pontiff to mount his horse. At the cathedral, which was decorated in a costly manner for such a grand occasion, the procession terminated, and the pontiff passed to the ducal palace, where no less than one hundred and forty rooms had been prepared for him and his

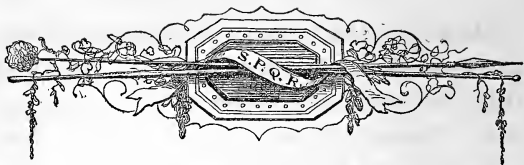
suite, with the usual lavish extravagance of tapestry, velvet, and brocade.

“The following day there was another procession. The Duchess Renée, attended by seventy-two ladies dressed in black, with gold embroidery, all on their horses, followed by twenty-two carriages also filled with ‘signore,’ and by the duke and others on horseback, made a progress through the city.

“The third day, however, exceeded all previous days in its varied splendors, for it was St. George’s day, and he was the patron saint of Ferrara. The pope first celebrated pontifical mass in the cathedral, and then presented the duke with the golden rose, and with the sword and hat which he had blessed. Ercole ‘humbly’ acknowledged these favors, and kissed the feet of Paul III., who concluded these ceremonies by kissing his vassal on both cheeks, by way of requiting that abject homage. The duchess was present on this occasion, a circumstance particularly recorded. ‘And thither went also madama la duchessa, with her ladies, who sat upon a stage prepared for them.’

“For the papal delectation after dinner, there was a tournament of sixteen nobles richly accoutred, which lasted two hours, and was witnessed by an innumerable crowd of people, as well as by the court and the distinguished guests in whose honor it took place. In the evening the literary tastes of Pope Paul were gratified by the performance of the Latin comedy of the ‘Adelphi’ of Terence; its various characters being sustained with great vivacity by the children of the duke and duchess, all of whom had a part in the recitation, although Prince Louis was but four years and a half old.

“The day following, the pope returned to Bologna, presenting, at his departure, the Duchess Renée with a costly diamond, and with a jewel composed of diamonds in the form of a flower, also bestowing rich presents on the ducal children.”



CHAPTER VI.

Calvin's Letter to the Duchess of Ferrara—The Marriage of Anna d'Este to Francis, Duke of Guise—Olympia Morata banished from Ferrara—The Martyr Fannio, Giorgio Siculo—The Mission of Doctor Oriz.

NOTWITHSTANDING the dignity and state that surrounded Duchess Renée, her mind was not fettered by it, nor the sweet inner-life tarnished by contact with influences seemingly unfavorable to spiritual growth and piety. The small Bible she brought from France was daily studied, and from her journal we find that the meditations of her heart were often on things heavenly and divine, when her bodily presence was given to the ceremonials of the court. Meanwhile the letters received from Calvin were a solace, as well as helps to her edification and her growth in the spiritual life.

Highly as the reformer estimated the zeal of Renée, he did not conceal his conviction that she yet needed instruction in the right way. Hearing, therefore, that she had been misled, by one from whom she ought to have learned better things, in a letter written toward the end of 1541, he denounced the false professor who would persuade her that attendance upon the popish mass was in no way sinful. But this he did, as he assures Renée, without either envy or hatred towards him. After treating very fully about things lawful and unlawful, and how scandals must be avoided, Calvin continues :

“Well, then, madame, seeing that it has pleased the Lord God, of his goodness and infinite compassion, to visit you with the knowledge of his name, and to enlighten you in the truth of his holy evangel, acknowledge your calling to which he has called you. For he has drawn us forth out of the depths of darkness, where we were detained captives, in order that we may follow uprightly the light of his word, without declining either to the one side or to the other, and that we may

seek more and more to be instructed by him, so that we may profit more abundantly in that holy wisdom wherein he has made some beginning among us: and, above all, to look to it carefully that we do not restrain his Spirit, as do those who shut their eyes and ears to the evident plain truth, being content to remain ignorant of that which the Lord would have them know and understand. It is not thus that he would have us to do out of mere dread that the Lord will punish such contempt and ingratitude; but rather we ought to study to profit continually in the school of this good Master, until we shall have attained perfection in his doctrine, which will be when we are free from this down-weighing and earthly evil of the flesh, praying with good David that He would instruct us in the doing of His will. Certes, if we go forward advancing therein with zealous affection, he will so guide us that he will not let us go astray out of the right path. And although there are still some remains of ignorance in us, he will vouchsafe a more full revelation, when there is need for it, seeing

that he knows the right season better than we do.

“The main point is to understand how His holy doctrine ought to become fruitful, and so bring forth fruit in us; and that is when it so transforms us by the renewal of our heart and mind, that his radiant glory, which consists in innocence, integrity, and holiness, relumes the soul within us. If it be not thus with us, we take the name of God in vain when we glorify ourselves by making our boast that we know the evangel. I do not say this to admonish you to do what you do not do at present, but on purpose that the work of God, which is already begun in you, may be confirmed from day to day.”

We know not which most to admire, the simplicity and faithfulness of Calvin, or the teachable spirit of the duchess. Under difficulties of no common order, she persevered and proved herself eminently worthy of the friendship with which she had inspired the great reformer.

The children of the duchess were now of an age to claim still more of her thoughts.

Anna is described as a young person of great beauty, united to affability of manner and a spirit singularly sweet and teachable. Without the mental strength of her mother, she still made very creditable attainments in learning, writing with ease and rapidity, and with a certain finish and eloquence, that comes from clearly understanding the subject with which the writer deals. One of the pastimes of which the duchess, as well as Olympia and Anna, was very fond, was the writing of dialogues, in some of which the immortality of the soul, and the state of future existence was the theme. This led to close investigation into the acts and motives of others; to comparing and sifting, and drawing conclusions from God's words. Still, neither Anna nor Olympia fully apprehended the simplicity of gospel teaching. The grace in the heart of the latter, like some delicate flower, was rather dwarfed than nourished. Discussions, in which the learning as well as the eloquence of the times was exhibited, grew upon her taste, and the duchess saw with sorrow that too freely roving in the fields of speculation

was altogether unsuited to minds not yet in full sympathy with the cross.

The death of Francis I. of France, and the accession of Henry II., was to affect Renée more signally than she had even dreamed. The infatuated attachment of the new king to the family of Guise inspired him with active zeal to provide a splendid matrimonial alliance for the young Francis of Guise, Duke d'Aumale, and governor of Dauphiny and Savoy. Impossible as he found it to win the Duke of Ferrara from the cause of the emperor, Henry still thought it not beyond his power to procure the hand of the duke's daughter, his own cousin, for his favorite noble; and, in spite of the aversion manifested by the family of Este, his negotiations were ultimately successful.

In January, 1548, the Cardinal Charles of Guise left Ferrara with "fair promises" to report favorably to the king of France on the manner in which his embassy had been received. The summer following Henry met Duke Ercole at Turin, and the final settlement of the marriage was agreed upon. On

the second of September the duke returned to Ferrara, and immediately commenced preparations for his daughter's nuptials, which were solemnized on the 29th of the same month, Prince Louis of Bourbon acting as proxy for Francis of Guise, in conjunction with Louis of Lorraine, and another brother of the bridegroom. Jousts, tourneys, and the customary festivities, followed the celebration of the marriage. But the externals of rejoicing did not hide the feeling of intense indignation in the hearts of the Ferrarese, by whom the princess was greatly beloved. They regarded this union with the French duke as a *mésalliance*; although the house of Guise had no reason to be ashamed of its ancestry. Anna, in truth, shared the not uncommon lot of princesses. Her union with Francis of Guise was a question of state policy. The Duke of Ferrara owed a large sum of money to the French king, and the gift of his daughter to Henry's favorite cancelled the debt. The duchess, with the younger princesses, Lucrezia and Leonora, accompanied the bride as far as Mantua, and returned sadly.

It was at this time that some petty jealousy crept in to mar the intercourse which had ever been of so friendly a nature between the young teacher Olympia Morata and her pupil. Whatever it was, we only know that the love of the duchess for her friend was sensibly abated. Before a reconciliation took place, Olympia left the court to attend her father in a protracted illness, from which he did not recover. When she returned, the Princess Anna was married. The displeasure of the duke rendered him unapproachable, while the anger of Renée was not to be appeased. Olympia had no advocate to plead her cause. "Once indeed she attempted to vindicate herself from the aspersions of her slanderers. But strange and inexplicable as it may seem, the duchess would not listen. Banished from court, the fatherless Olympia dared not reclaim the wardrobe that had been hers, and it was only at the request of Madame Orsini that the duchess permitted the restoration of one of her robes. Thus was the persecution of the reformers at Ferrara inaugurated, by the sufferings of one whose

past life of enjoyment was but an indifferent preparation for trouble." But a salutary change was wrought in her mind. From this moment she no longer halted between two opinions, but resolved to live and die a follower of the gospel. Such a resolution she knew well was not without peril in that dark and intolerant age; but her trust was in the living God, and to him she committed herself. In communion with her own heart, she began to perceive her need of these trials. Writing to her friend and her father's friend, Curione, she says: "Oh, how I needed this trial! If I had remained longer at court, it would have been all over with me and my salvation." In the seclusion of her mother's house she employed herself in study and in the instruction of her young sisters, but more especially in spiritual contemplation and devotion.

From this time the brilliancy of Renée's court was visibly dimmed. The literary men who had been the pride of Ferrara began to withdraw. The brothers Sinapi speedily left the palace, whence their distinguished pupil had been so cruelly spurned. The brilliant Fran-

cesca Bucyronia was a willing exile from a spot which she had enjoyed so much. And we can well imagine that Renée was not without her share of sorrow as she missed from her stately halls not alone the princess Anna, but also the friends who had been held so dear.

From any further consequences of persecution Olympia was preserved by her marriage with Andrew Gruntler, a German, the pupil of her father, and the friend of her instructors, the brothers Sinapi. In the spring of 1551 she accompanied her husband to Germany, taking with her her youngest brother, Emilio.

While Olympia was enduring the discipline of calumny at Ferrara, another was suffering in the horrid dungeons of the same city "for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." This was Faventino Fannio, of Faenza. Receiving the light of divine grace into his own heart, he began to teach his fellow-citizens from the word of God. This came to the ears of the inquisitor, and Fannio was cast into prison. There the entreaties of his wife prevailed on him to save

his life by recantation. No sooner was he free than his conscience bitterly reproached him for his unfaithfulness in denying Christ. His remorse was unceasing, and he could not enjoy a moment's repose until he had resumed his former manner of life. To make amends for his error, he now resolved to confess Christ openly. His zeal was thus ardently kindled. He went about Romagna, preaching in every city. If in any place he found it difficult publicly to announce the gospel, he sought opportunity for conversation with any one who would hear him. While thus occupied he was again arrested, and condemned not to prison but to the flames. He was first taken to Ferrara, and remained there long enough to make many converts. The pope, fearing his influence, ordered him to be imprisoned in the castle. There he remained eighteen months, and was frequently put to the torture. But this did not affect his constancy. He continued firmly rejoicing that all things work together for good to those who love Christ.

While Fannio was in prison he was visited

by Lavinia della Rovere and Olympia Morata. Without doubt the Duchess Renée gave him her sympathy. But all intercessions were fruitless. Fannio was hanged upon the piazza. His body was afterwards burnt, and the ashes scattered on the river Arno. And thus to Ferrara was accorded the unenviable distinction of being the scene of the first martyrdom in Italy for the cause of the Reformation. The following spring was marked by another martyrdom in Ferrara, the victim being a man of learning named Giorgio Siculo.

Thus the work of blood proceeded. But the dispersion of the reformed church at Ferrara could not satisfy the cravings of its persecutors while the Duchess Renée persisted in her obnoxious sentiments. The duke himself, stimulated by his confessor, was more determined than ever to vindicate the claims of Rome.

Ercole appears to have made known the state of the case to his wife's nephew, Henry II. of France, who immediately returned an answer to the effect that, at whatever cost, the

duchess must be constrained to profess the doctrines of the Holy See. To explain the part that Henry took in this matter we cannot do better than give his instructions to the inquisitor Oriz :

“The doctor Oriz, one of the presentiaries of our holy father, the pope, being arrived at Ferrara, where the king instantly sends him, shall deliver to Monsieur the Duke of Ferrara the letters which the said king has written to him with his own hand, and shall tell him how he has express charge from his majesty to employ himself, and to do entirely all that he can do in the affair for which he is despatched. And thereupon he shall know from the said duke the means which he will have to take, the better and the more carefully to begin and to carry on the work, so good, so holy and salutary, which by the commandment of the king he has undertaken.

“After that he shall have understood from the said lord duke what he will have to do when entering into conversation with madame la duchesse, and when he shall have well and diligently inquired and informed himself of

the principal points upon which she has fallen into error, to the end that according thereunto he may consider the remonstrances, propositions, and allegations which he shall use to reclaim her, and to bring her back to the flock of Jesus Christ, he shall deliver to her the letter which the king has written to her with his own hand. He shall tell her that his majesty has heard in several places, after that they had long concealed it from him, as not daring to speak to him of it, the misfortune, than which no greater could have happened to the said lady, who has suffered herself to be hurried into the labyrinths of these unhappy opinions, contrary and repugnant to our holy faith and religion. He has received in his heart from it such grief, sorrow, and annoyance as it is impossible to know how to express, this news being nothing else to him than that of the loss of the bodily and spiritual life of his only aunt, whom he has always so much loved, esteemed, and honored, as he doth singularly still ; so that when he shall hear of her reconciliation and reduction to the true obedience of the church, the ease

and pleasure that he will receive from it will not be less than if he saw her raised from death to life ; and he knows of nothing in the world for which he will render thanks to God with greater sincerity than if he see her, as he hopes, shortly reconciled and reclaimed to the pale of our mother, the holy church, exempted and purged from these blameable, condemnable, and reprobated errors. To this she ought to be the more moved and incited by consideration of the great favors which God has granted to her, and, among others, of being the issue of the purest blood of the most Christian house of France, where no monster has ever existed ; and to perceive now, that if, instead of following in the footsteps of her progenitors, who with singular zeal have always embraced the protection of our holy catholic faith, this lady should choose to remain in stubbornness and pertinacity, it would displease the king as much as anything in the world, and would cause him entirely to forget the friendship, with all the observances and demonstrations of a good nephew, he hating nothing with a greater

hatred than all those of the reprobate sects, whose mortal enemy he is.

“And if, after such remonstrances and persuasions, together with those which the said Doctor Oriz shall employ of his own way and profession, to make her to know the truth, and the difference which there is between light and darkness, it shall appear that he is unable by gentle means to gain her and to reclaim her, he shall take counsel with the said lord duke as to what can possibly be done in the way of rigor and severity to bring her to reason. And, in the first place, the king is of opinion that, upon the principal points where she is found to be most in error, the said lord duke should cause by the said Oriz to be preached sermons, at which he shall be present, and shall require the presence likewise of the said lady and all her family, whatever refusal or difficulty she may make to it; and having continued this for some days, if he perceives that by such means he can in no wise profit the said lady, the said Oriz shall declare to her, in the presence of him, the lord duke, that the king has given

him express charge by this present instruction, signed by his own hand, which he will then show to her, that if so it should be that this lady, after that everything has been done that is possible in her case, should finally remain obstinate and pertinacious in such errors, without otherwise choosing to return to the obedience of the church, and to the observance of our holy Catholic faith, [then] his majesty wills and approves, and indeed prays and exhorts him, the said duke, very earnestly, that he would cause the said lady to be put into a place secluded from society and conversation, where she may henceforth injure no one but herself, taking from her her children and the whole of her family entirely, of whatever nation they be, who shall be found burdened with, or be vehemently suspected of, the said errors and false doctrines, that they may be put upon their trial, the said Oriz being sent for, who is experienced in such matters belonging to his profession, he being inquisitor of the faith in this kingdom.

“ And these said trials being over, that ex-

emplary punishment be done upon the abettors and delinquents; his majesty confiding in the said lord duke to use, in such executions and procedures (as in those which shall affect the person of the said lady, and follow upon them) such discretion and mode of action that justice may take effect without scandal or notoriety, as regards this lady and those dependent upon her."

Such was the instruction of King Henry II. to the inquisitor Oriz. Before he arrived, however, the duke, acting on the advice of the Jesuit Pellatario, dismissed all the suspected members of Renée's household, including a preacher, a steward, an almoner, and the learned preceptor of the princesses Lucrezia and Leonora—Francesco Porta da Creta, who was suspected of having imbibed the same obnoxious doctrines. After this deed of tyranny on the part of Ercole, "the duchess, either in disgust at the treatment, or by the command of her husband, took up her abode in the palace of Consandolo, [1554.]

"The efforts of Oriz were fruitless. He persuaded, argued, preached, threatened in

vain. In her retirement, the duchess prosecuted her correspondence with Geneva; and even scrupled not to eat meat on Wednesdays." These were unpardonable offences. But Renée's contumacy was still further aggravated by her attempts "to make to herself pupils," in the neighboring Terra di Argenta. This last act made the cup of the duke's indignation to overflow. He had labored in vain for her conversion. His confessor, Pelletario, made not the least impression, and Oriz, far from changing the mind of the duchess, might as well have remained in Paris.

"These were bitter subjects of reflection to Ercole. He determined to strike a decisive blow." In the darkness of night he caused her to be conveyed from the Palace di St. Francesco in a carriage to the gloomy Castle of Ferrara. "There, strictly confined in the Cavallo chambers, with only two attendants, she had time to meditate on her situation, and to anticipate still worse results. The two princesses were taken to the Convent di Corpo Cristo, where they were admitted as pupils, to be carefully educated in what was termed

the Catholic faith. Many there doubtless were who in hope and fear waited to see what would be the issue of these events. Not for Renée's sake alone was their anxiety awakened, but for that of the almost expiring cause of the Reformation in Italy. In spite of the duchess' occasional concessions to the demands of the dominant religion," it was well known that her heart was true to the reformed doctrines. "It would now be seen if she were prepared to stand by those doctrines with unshaken fidelity, or would deny that her life was influenced by them. And beloved as she was in Ferrara, we may readily imagine the interests which thrilled all ranks in behalf of the good duchess Renée."

"When, therefore, it was heard that Pelletario had been summoned to the castle, that he had received the confession of the duchess, and had also administered the eucharist to the penitent according to the rites of the church of Rome, what varied feelings must these reports have excited. To the suffering members of the reformed communion, what surprise and sorrow must it have occasioned."

“Renée’s emancipation from the dismal captivity of the castle was granted by the duke immediately on his receiving from Pelletario information of her confession and restoration to the Roman church. That same night they supped together in token of their renewed amity, and the next day the children, of whose presence she had been so harshly deprived, were again consigned to her maternal care. To leave no doubt of the reality of her repentance, Renée again partook of the sacrament of the mass, and the duke, in token of his satisfaction, permitted her to return to the Palace of St. Francesco.’”





CHAPTER VII.

Reconciliation of Alfonso with the Duke—War in Italy—
The Marriage of Prince Alfonso—Renée's Kindness to the
French Soldiers.

“**T**HREE days after the Duchess Renée's emancipation from the castle-prison, her eldest son, Alfonso, returned from Flanders, and was received by his father with civility, if not affection. The spirit of the young prince had been stirred by the sound of war between Henry II. of France and the emperor, and he earnestly desired to partake in the exciting hazards of the pending contest. To this his father would not listen. Therefore, collecting by loans from various individuals a sufficient sum of money, he left Ferrara, under pretext of joining in a hawking expedition without the walls of the city, accompanied, as usual, by the gentle-

men of his bed-chamber and others in office about his person. At the Passo del Paolino, he declared his intention of proceeding at once to Paris, and set forth thither, taking with him fifteen of his attendants, and dismissing the rest. The journey was successfully accomplished, and the prince was welcomed with great distinction by his cousin of France, Henry II., who decorated him with the order of St. Michael, and gave him the command of a troop of a hundred men, with a pension in advance to provide for his necessities.

“This step on the part of his son and heir caused much disgust to Duke Ercole. Failing in his endeavor to have the prince overtaken and brought back to Ferrara, he caused the effigy of Gio Tommaso Lavezzuolo, a companion of Alfonso, to be suspended by one foot before the windows of the Palazzo della Ragione. Moreover the duke offered a reward for the capture of the offender, dead or alive, as the original counsellor of the prince’s flight to Paris. But when Alfonso desired to return to Ferrara, he encountered

no resentment on the part of his father, while his arrival was welcomed by the citizens with great pomp and rejoicings."

"The political inclinations of the Duke of Ferrara might have been inferred to be on the side of Henry II., by reason of his own marriage with the Princess Renée, of France, and that of his eldest daughter with the Duke of Guise, who claimed to be of the blood royal of the same kingdom. But his allegiance to Charles V., of whom he held Modena and Reggio in fee, drew him the other way. Now, however, motives of prudence combined with the claims of relationship to produce an alteration in Ercole's policy."

Pope Paul IV., in order to free himself from dependence on the House of Austria, did not scruple to invoke another French invasion of Italy. Accordingly he joined in a league with Henry II. of France, against Philip, king of Spain, likewise king of Naples, and duke of Milan. "The party of Philip II. in Italy being greatly strengthened by the combined alliance of Cosmo de' Médici, duke of Florence, and Ottavio Farnese, duke of

Parma, required some effective counterpoise ; and the pope and the king of France naturally looked to the Duke of Ferrara, the feudatory of the former, and the uncle by marriage of the latter. Ercole strongly resisted, but his reluctance finally yielded to the flatteries of the Duke of Guise. He joined the league in November, 1556, when he was named its ‘Captain-General,’ and ‘Lieutenant General of the Army of France in Italy.’”

The Duke of Guise, at the commencement of the next year, entered Italy with the entire French army. His only thought was of Naples. In the meanwhile, Philibert, duke of Savoy, - was effecting a diversion in the low countries. The victory of St. Quentin decided the fate of the French army on the Flemish frontier, whose general, the Constable de Montgomery, was taken prisoner. The Duke of Guise was recalled to the defence of Paris, and the pope was at the mercy of Philip II.

“The operations of Duke Ercole in this war were restricted to the province of Lombardy, which he steadily refused to leave, although urged by the pope to turn his arms against

Naples. At Reggio, whither Ercole went with the Ferrarese troops, he was joined by the Duke de Guise, and by his eldest son, Alfonso." Nevertheless, he obstinately refused to accompany the invading army into the Abruzzo. He consented, however, to furnish it munitions of war, while he occupied the north in order effectually to hold in check the Spaniards of the Milanese. "War had always been distasteful to Ercole II., and he certainly won no laurels in this contest. The Venitians, whose coöperation he strenuously sought, declined to join in the strife. Ercole failed in the attempt to reduce Coreggio and Guastalla, and had nearly fallen a victim, with all his house, to a conspiracy concocted in Ferrara, under the connivance of Cardinal Madrucci, the Marquis of Pescara, and Ferrante di Gonzaga, partisans of King Philip in Lombardy."

The plot was accidentally discovered, and frustrated, and Ercole turned it to advantage by offering it as another pretext for not carrying his army to a great distance from his own territories. Paul IV., however, punished his vassal's lukewarmness by omitting to have

his name included in the treaty of peace with Philip II. Ercole, therefore, remained exposed to the animosity of the Spanish party in Lombardy. Henry II. also manifested a total indisposition to aid the unfortunate duke, and but for Prince Alfonso the case would have been desperate. "The prince, accompanied by Cornelio Bentivoglio, at the head of four thousand infantry, together with four pieces of artillery, gave battle to the army of Parma and routed it. Shortly afterwards, Cosmo, duke of Florence, a friend of Ercole, succeeded in bringing about a pacification between the king of Spain and Ottavio Farnese on the one side, and the Duke of Ferrara on the other. The marriage of Prince Alfonso with Lucrezia, third daughter of Cosmo, sealed the reconciliation of the ducal houses of Ferrara and Florence. Leaving his bride at the court of her father, Alfonso set out for Paris immediately after the nuptial ceremony, to resume military service under Henry II., and to justify Duke Ercole's withdrawal from the league."

In these stirring events we cannot for a

moment imagine the Duchess Renée an indifferent observer. The celebrated warrior Montluc relates how, on his arrival at Ferrara, (after the reverses at St Quentin had necessitated the recall of Guise,) he was received and welcomed, not only by the duke and his brother the cardinal, but also by "Madame la Duchesse," as if he had been their own brother. He adds: "They would that I should lodge in the castle," where they entertained him with all hospitality. And in another place, after narrating his success in throwing succor into Vercelli, and his return to Ferrara when peace was restored. "It is unnecessary to ask if I was welcomed by Monsieur the Duke, Monsieur the Cardinal, and by Madame la Duchesse, for I do not think they ever caressed any man, of whatever condition he might be, more than myself."

"In harmony with Renée's grateful reception of her valiant compatriot, was her benevolent care for the perishing soldiery of France, the remains of the army of Guise, after their brilliant leader had forsaken his command in

Italy. Their situation was pitiable in the extreme. No less than ten thousand of these destitute creatures were saved from death by the liberal hand of Renée. For, as they passed through Ferrara, she supplied them all with money and medicines, as far as was in her power; and when her steward represented to her her heavy expenses, she only answered, ‘What would you have me do? These are poor Frenchmen, and my countrymen, who, if God had given me a beard on my chin and I had been a man, would all now have been my subjects; and would have been such, nevertheless, if that unjust Salic law did not bear too hard upon me.’” It would, no doubt, have been for the prosperity of France had Renée reigned over her. As it was, she has left a worthy record in its honor.





CHAPTER VIII.

Galeazzo Caraccioli—Calvin's Letter—Religious Persecution in France—Death of Henry II. of France—Death of Ercole, Duke of Ferrara—Renée the Head of State—Renée returns to France.

IMPOSSIBLE as we may find it to excuse or to palliate the dissembling course Renée pursued in reference to her reconciliation with Rome, we cannot doubt, however, that it was her affection in part that led her astray. The knowledge that her daughters were entered as pupils in the Convent di Corpo Cristo, "to be carefully educated in what was termed the Catholic faith," was in itself sufficient to unnerve the heart of a mother, and cause her, like Peter, in the moment of human weakness to deny her Master with her lips. But like Peter, her faith was afterwards strengthened by reason of her very fall.

Neither did the martyrdoms in Ferrara

wholly deprive her of Christian friends and associates. There was one, eminent among the reformed Italians for his constancy to the faith, with whom the duchess "took sweet counsel." This was Galeazzo Caraccioli, the eldest son of the Marquis of Vico. There were many who hailed with delight the conversion of this young noble; but to his own family it was altogether distasteful. The marquis, his father, would not listen to what he called his son's "heresy." His wife resisted all his efforts to win her from the religion of Rome, and strove on her part to turn him away from the truths which he had embraced. Finding that liberty to serve his God according to his conscience would be denied him in Naples, he resolved to separate himself from all that he held dear in this world, rather than lose what was dearer to him still, his peace of mind and his integrity.

Accordingly he withdrew from court and retired to Geneva, where he placed himself under the instruction of Calvin, and became not merely his pupil but his friend. Led by a sense of filial duty, Caraccioli returned on

a visit to his father, "taking Ferrara in his way, where he was joyfully received of Franciscus Portus. This Portus brought him into acquaintance with the noble Duchess of Ferrara, who entertained him honorably, and after much conference had with him of the alteration of his religion, and of the success of his long voyages and tedious journeys, of the church of Geneva, of Calvin, and of many chief points of Christian religion, she dismissed him and left him to his journey, but not without all courtesies that she could afford him; and, namely, for one, to relieve the length and tediousness of the way, she sent him her own chariot, and thus 'Galeacius' was conveyed in the chariot of so great a princess as far as the town of Francolium."

Something of the inner-life of the duchess we discover in the letters of Calvin at this period. The manuscript collections of Dupuy present us with one showing the tenderness of the great reformer. Seeking to fortify her mind he is careful not to "break the bruised reed." He preserves his old incognito of "Charles d'Espeville."

“MADAM : I praise God that the man whom I had sent to you discharged his duties so well that you are satisfied with him, for that being the case, I hope that his exertions will have served at the same time to bring you forward on the way of salvation. Now, since God has not permitted that he should on this occasion follow out his employment at greater length, I beseech you, madam, at whatever cost, to persevere in being daily taught in the school of our Lord Jesus Christ, as in fact you know well enough without being admonished by others, that you have need to be, especially at a time when the devil is stirring up all the vexations he can, in order to make you turn away from it. Nay, since you have to resist all the intrigues that this mortal enemy of our salvation plies against you, call to mind, also, that God uses this means for the trial of your faith. If to be thus tested seem to you a hard and rough trial, think well on what St. Peter says : ‘If a corruptible metal is put into the fire that it may be known to be good and true, much more shall the faith, which is far more precious, not be spared.’ If you feel in yourself more weakness than might be wished, have recourse to Him who has promised that all those who hope in Him shall be as the tree planted by the waters, having a good and living root, which never withers under any heat that may come. For it is certain that He will never suffer us to be tempted beyond that which we are able to bear, and that if he looses Satan’s rein, He will increase in us, measure for measure, the power of overcoming him in all things.

“It is good and useful to us, that we sound well

the depth of our infirmity, not that it may make us sink indolently into despair, but that we may become anxious to find the remedy for it. Whereupon, madam, while you preserve your trust that the enemies who so furiously rage will be of no avail, however they may strive, without the leave of the sovereign Master, be not weary of combating with all temptations; and inasmuch as weapons are necessary to you in that combat, while you seek to Him who is able to make you strong, exercise yourself in attending to holy exhortations, and, as I have already said, take good heed not to despise the having a person daily to stir you up, which measure you have up to this time found on trial to be very useful to you, and in promoting which I hope that our friends will not be found wanting. Only, madam, take courage; yield not to Satan the vantage which he looks for of finding you unprepared. Even were the condition of the children of God a hundred times harder than it is, not a thought should be entertained of abandoning the good to which God by his infinite goodness has been pleased to call us.

“Madam, I humbly commend myself to your good graces, having just entreated our good God to direct you always by his Spirit, to strengthen you in his righteousness, to keep you under his protection, and to enrich you in every good thing.

“Your very humble servant,

“CHARLES D’ESPEVILLE.

“This 20th July, 1558.”

While Renée was living a life of comparative seclusion in Ferrara, her native land, under its cruel king Henry II., was from time to time the scene of savage persecution. Like his father, Francis I., Henry loved to witness the lingering martyrdom of his victims, feasting his eyes on sights of mortal agony and more than mortal endurance. Henry was also as perfidious as he was cruel. The measures already adopted against heresy were not, in his opinion, severe enough. The parliament which had refused to sanction the establishment of the Inquisition in France, contained suspected members. To detect them, the cardinal of Lorraine devised a plan which his sovereign carried into execution. Henry went to the hall of parliament, and there holding "a bed of justice," invited the members to state freely before him their opinions on the proper treatment of heresy.

Entrapped by this simulated candor, the presidents Harlai, Seguier, and De Thou, argued in behalf of the toleration of doctrines, in the belief of which nevertheless they did not share, and two others, Louis du Faur and

Anne du Bourg, boldly avowed their sympathy with the Reformation, and lifted up their voices in the cause of their persecuted brethren. The king was transported with fury at their fearless words; he commanded the two speakers to be instantly arrested and dragged to prison. Their doom was sealed.

The judgment of God signally followed. While the two counsellors lay in prison, awaiting a bloody death, a grand tournament took place in Paris. Then it was that the lance of Montgomery unwittingly avenged them of their adversary. Henry, so unexpectedly struck down, fell mortally wounded into the arms of Prince Alfonso of Ferrara, and after lingering for twelve days, expired. When the terrible tidings reached Ferrara, the duke caused a splendid funeral service to be celebrated for his like-minded nephew, in the cathedral. In less than three months after the death of the king of France, Ercole himself was summoned to his account. In his will, which bore the date of 1558, he assigned to the Duchess Renée the usufruct of the palace of Belriguardo, and of half of the lands

appertaining thereunto, "for so long as she shall live as a good Catholic."

"The death of the duke placed the Duchess Renée in an important position in Ferrara. Her two sons, Alfonso and Luigi, were at the French court, and Cardinal Ippolito II., their uncle, had left Ferrara, to take his seat in the Roman conclave. Francesco d'Este, the uncle of the late duke, was in the service of Spain. The reins of government, therefore, fell into the hands of Renée. Having despatched a courier to Paris with the fatal intelligence, and given honorable interment to the remains of her deceased husband, she assumed with vigor the direction of the state. She intrusted Modena to Don Alfonso d'Este, son of Alfonso I. by a morganatic marriage, and took measures for the defence of Ferrara, as though the enemy were actually at the gates.

"When the tidings of his father's death reached Alfonso, he immediately sent a messenger to Ferrara with various commissions, and most loving letters to his mother and to the city. Then he hastened to take leave

of the young king, Francis II., who upon the duke's departure issued a brevet commemorating his relationship and his service, and granting an annual income of twenty thousand scudi d'oro del sole, to be paid on the surrender of Caen in Normandy, which was part of the dowry of the Princess Renée, his mother."

From Marseilles, Alfonso sailed to Leghorn, and thence to Florence to visit his wife, whom he had so abruptly quitted after their marriage in the previous year. From Florence his journey to Ferrara was one grand ovation. It was expected that he would dismount, according to custom, at the Belvedere Palace without the walls, and the nobility of Ferrara there assembled to meet him. But he disappointed their expectations, by going first, incognito, to visit the duchess, his mother, at her palace within the city. The next day he retired to the Belvedere, where he remained in privacy till the preparations were completed for his first public entry into Ferrara as its duke.

The young sovereign's first act was one of

mercy. He gave liberty to an aged relative, Giulio d'Este, brother of Alfonso I., who for a conspiracy in 1505, had languished for fifty-three miserable years in prison. At this generous act the public were enthusiastic. Giulio, in whose breast age had not extinguished feeling, nor the gloom of so long a captivity obliterated the sense of enjoyment, was wild with delight. When released from his fetters, he appeared in the same costume which he wore when, more than half a century previous, he had been cast into prison.

Very early in his reign, Alfonso II. gave proofs that he had inherited the literary tastes which for generations distinguished the family of d'Este. He restored and reopened the University of Ferrara, which had become almost extinct during the latter years of his father's life. He also made known his intention of establishing a press at Ferrara for the purpose of printing such hitherto inedited works as might be deemed advantageous to the cause of letters; but it is extremely doubtful if this munificent design was ever carried into execution.

Meanwhile the Duchess Renée relying on her maternal influence over the young duke, hesitated not to speak of the "wholesome doctrines" she had imbibed. The effect was instantaneous. Alfonso could not bear the scandal which the heresy of the duchess was bringing upon the House of Este. The tide of opinion had turned in Italy, and the church of Rome had everywhere recovered her lost ground.

Alfonso dared not offend the pope, nor had he learned the genial principles of toleration at such a court as that of Henry II. Therefore he enforced on his mother the stern alternatives either to change her religion or to depart from Italy. With a faith that had grown firm with years, Renée chose to leave a city that had been her home for more than thirty years. "Mightily," says the chronicler, "did the loss of this royal princess displease the people of Ferrara, because, fascinating every one with the vivacity of her intellect, and the sweetness of her manners, she was beloved by every one to a high degree, and so much the more by reason of her unequalled liber-

ality, for she never tired of aiding the necessitous by alms."

The true cause of the dowager-duchess' return to France was not generally known to the Ferrarese. The report was, that she went away, because dissatisfied with the duke, her son. On September, 1560, she set out on her journey. A barge conveyed her household and personal effects as far as Turin. She herself departed in a litter, accompanied by her younger son, Luigi, who went with her to France. Duke Alfonso attended his mother, with a train of three hundred persons, nobles, ladies, and cavaliers, as far as Finale in the Modenese, where they took a sad, but final leave of each other.





CHAPTER IX.

The Changes wrought in Thirty Years—The Rival Houses of Bourbon and Guise—Continued Persecution in France—La Renaudie's Plan of Revenge—Sympathy of Anne, Duchess of Guise—Correspondence on the part of Olympia Morata.

THE France which Renée left in the freshness of her early girlhood, differed widely from the France to which she returned, a widow and an outcast, separated from her younger children by the mandate of her own son.

At the court of France, Renée must have felt herself as belonging to a bygone generation. Thirty years left only here and there one of a generation she had known. Louise of Savoy, Francis I., and Marguerite, were no longer there to greet her. Many of the intermediate generation of the royal house had also passed away. The three sons of

the good Queen Claude were all numbered with the dead; so also was their sister Magdalene. Of the former celebrities, the Constable de Montmorency alone survived to recall to Renée's remembrance the chivalrous age of Francis I.

The political aspect of France was as much changed as the personal aspect of its court. The interest with which foreign affairs had been regarded by the nation was now diverted to domestic broils, and the spectacle which the French court displayed at the return of Renée, was that of an intense struggle between two rival houses, each claiming affinity with royalty. These were the houses of Bourbon and of Guise, the former descending from a younger son of St. Louis, the latter from Charlemagne.

The domination of the Guises over France and her monarch was never so firm as it seemed at least to be at the accession of Francis II. Notwithstanding the glare of royal favor, they were looked upon as foreigners by the nation, who denounced their pretensions to the claims of the "blood roy-

al." Nor was the House of Bourbon disposed to acquiesce in their usurped authority. Antoine de Bourbon, duke de Vendôme, was the head of the Bourbon family. By his wife Jeanne d'Albrêt, daughter of Henry II. and Marguerite of Navarre, he had acquired possession of that little kingdom. He is described as of a noble and majestic aspect, graceful, affable, and open in bearing, and yet wanting in all the moral qualities which go to make a noble manhood. Incapable of mental application, loving luxury, and too indolent for successful intrigue, he was no match for the Guises. Charles, cardinal of Bourbon, was not stronger in qualities which lead to honorable distinction; or exalt to successful leadership of a great party or a great cause. But the youngest brother, Louis, prince of Condé, gave promise of a grander development, and "even his enemies grant him to have possessed in the highest degree all the qualities that make a hero." That he had faults cannot be denied; but they were faults, that like the night, only caused his virtues to shine more brightly.

The history of France during many years of the sixteenth century, is the history of the rival houses of Guise and Bourbon. The wars which ensued have been called the wars of religion in France. The reformed had nothing to hope for from the Cardinal of Lorraine; and the trial and execution of the brave Du Bourg, gave them to understand what might be expected if they appealed to their sovereign. Besides this significant act of cruelty, edicts, given in the name of the young king, and registered by the parliament, ordained the destruction of all houses in which heretical assemblies had been held, and which were never again to be rebuilt, the punishment of death on all who had been present at these assemblies, and the appointment of a commissioner to receive secret information upon all such cases.

Arrests were numerous; the property of such as sought to save themselves by flight was confiscated; while their forsaken children wandered homeless through the streets of the city, imploring charity in vain.

These persecuted people were alternately

denominated Lutherans and Sacramentarians in the letters patent which denounced them. They were also known as "Christandins," and finally their enemies settled down upon the name of "Huguenots," a designation which they finally acquiesced in themselves.

At length the arrogance of the cardinal of Lorraine brought things to a crisis. An edict revoking the donation of domains made by Henry, and a positive refusal to discharge even the legal obligations of the crown, were followed up by a proclamation in the name of the king, to the effect that all persons, of whatever condition, who had come to the court to solicit the payment of debts, or the fulfilment of promises, should take their departure from it in twenty-four hours, on pain of being hanged; and to show what was meant, a gibbet was forthwith erected near the palace in one of the most conspicuous places. As almost all the claimants were of the rank of gentlemen, the French noblesse took fire at this insult, and meditated revenge on its authors.

There was one Godefroi de Barri, seigneur de la Renaudie, whose determined char-

acter, activity, and intelligence, amply fitted him to be the leader of a conspiracy. The plan proposed was as follows: A large number of Huguenots were to present themselves unarmed before the king at Blois, with a petition imploring him to withdraw the persecuting edicts, and to grant the Reformed the free exercise of their religion. And, since these assembling at night had afforded their enemies a pretext for calumniating their conduct, they were to beseech the king to grant permission for their assembling in temples open to the public, and under the eye of authority. Meanwhile, when the royal attention was attracted to this crowd of unarmed petitioners at the foot of the throne, five hundred horsemen, and a thousand infantry, chosen from among gentlemen the most devoted to the cause of the Huguenots, were to meet from the different provinces, to advance in silence, surprise the town of Blois, seize the persons of the Guises, bring them to trial, engage Francis II. to follow henceforth the counsels of the Bourbon princes, and to convoke the States-General.

The conspiracy failed. The Guises being warned, measures were craftily taken to lull the Huguenots into a false security, and thus to secure their after-destruction. The court removed from Blois to Amboise. It was known that the secret had transpired, but La Renaudie, judging that matters had gone too far to admit of a retreat, pushed the affair to extremity. The precautions of the Guises were, however, too well taken. La Renaudie, at the head of his troops, encountered a royal force near his own château, and was slain in the combat. Another of the leaders, Castelnau, had previously surrendered himself to the Duke of Nemours. Mazère and Raunai were also prisoners. Then began those executions which have blackened for ever the names of those who ordered them. Not less than twelve hundred victims perished to glut the vengeance of the brothers of Guise.

“The executions proceeded,” says the chronicler, “with the greatest diligence, for not a day nor a night passed in which a good number were not put to death, and all of

them personages of distinction. Some were drowned, others hanged, others beheaded. But what was strange to see, and a thing that had never happened under any form of government, was their being led to execution without any sentence publicly pronounced upon them, or any declaration made of the reason of their deaths, or even of their names. One thing observed was, that the executions were reserved until after dinner, contrary to custom; but the Guises did this expressly to afford *some pastime for the ladies*, who had become weary of being so long in this place. And in truth they both—men and women—took station at the windows of the castle, as if there had been some ‘*momeries*’ to be played before them, being moved neither by pity nor compassion—at least there was no appearance of any in them. And what is worse, the king and his young brothers appeared at these spectacles, and the sufferers were pointed out to them by the cardinal, with the signs of a man who rejoiced greatly to animate the prince against his own subjects; for when they died with the greatest

constancy, he would say, 'Behold, sire, these audacious infuriates! The fear of death cannot abate their pride and malice; what would they then do if they had you in their hands?'"

The Prince of Condé, who, had gone to Amboise to disarm suspicion, was an unwilling witness to some of these murders. But it is said there was one among the ladies of the court to whom these terrible scenes did not afford "pastime." Anna d'Este, duchess of Guise, bathed in tears, rushed from the balcony where she had just witnessed the death of Castelnau and his companions, to the apartment of the queen-mother, from whom she looked for sympathy, because the time had not long gone by when Catherine had agreed with her in regarding the Huguenots as innocent persons. The queen beholding her thus afflicted, demanded "what was the matter, and what had happened to distress her, and to cause such strange lamentations."

"I have," she replied, "all the occasion in the world for my grief, for I have just looked

upon the most piteous tragedy, and strange cruelty in the effusion of the blood of the innocent and good subjects of the king, and I doubt not but shortly some great misfortune will come upon our house for it, and that God will wholly exterminate us for the cruelty and inhumanities which are perpetrated."

The idol of a court that could witness such scenes unmoved, and closely allied to the leader of a party thirsting for the blood of the Reformed, Anna's heart was thus far tender as in her girlhood. We venture to presume upon the patience of our readers by copying a letter from Olympia Morata, written previously to the conspiracy of Amboise, urging the Duchess of Guise to intercede in behalf of the persecuted Huguenots, her brethren in one common faith.

"Olympia Morata Grunthler offers to Anna d'Este, duchess of Guise, wishes for her abundant health, through Jesus Christ.

"Although, illustrious Princess Anna, we have for a long while been parted by a wide distance from place to place; never yet, up to the present moment, have I ceased to remember thee. If I had not, for many good reasons, been afraid to do so, I would

have written directly to thee. But now, an opportunity having presented itself in a visit made to us by a certain learned and pious man from Lorraine, the first use I made of it was to inquire of him how thou wert. And in his promising to take care that my letter should be conveyed to thee, I could not make up my mind to think that thou wouldest be so hard-hearted as not to read with willingness a letter coming from one who had been brought up with thee from thy early youth. For thou knowest how familiarly (though thou wert my princess and mistress) we lived so many years with one another, and how we pursued together literary studies which might well continually increase the mutual attachment which grew up between us. I, for my part, noble princess, call God to witness that I wish thee well and desire thy good always. Could I in any way be of service to thee, not that I should be inclined again to live in a court, (for that I might do here, if I would,) but if, in my absence from thee, either by a word of consolation, or in any other way, I can be of advantage to thee, be assured that I will do it with a glad mind and with special earnestness. There is nothing, however, that I long for more, than that thou shouldest seriously betake thyself to the study of Holy Scripture, which alone can bring thee into union with God, and comfort thee in all the sufferings of this life. I certainly find consolation and delight nowhere else. For as soon as by the signal loving-kindness of God I was removed from that idolatry which there was in Italy, and went into Germany, after my marriage to

a physician, Andrew Grunthler, God wrought in my mind a change hardly to be believed, so that I, who before shrank back from the word of God to the farthest extent that I could, now find it all my enjoyment, and set all my love, care, labor, nay, my whole heart, on this; that as far as possible I may despise all these things, wealth, honor, pleasure, which I used once so fondly to admire. And, in very truth I would, my best princess, that thou wouldest again and again think on these subjects, believe me. All is changing; and as he (the poet you know of) says, 'The path of death must, once for all, be trodden by every one;' and that soon. For years are fleeting; riches are of no avail, honors of none; royal favor of none. No; only that faith by which we cleave to Christ can rescue us from that eternal death and condemnation with it. And since that faith is 'the gift of God,' thou shouldest ask it of him with thy most urgent prayers. For it is not enough to know the history of Christ; we must have the faith that 'works by love,' which renders thee bold to confess Christ among his enemies; otherwise, (saith he,) 'Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, of him shall I also be ashamed before my Father.' Nor would any ever have stood forth to be martyrs, if they had concealed their faith. Wherefore, my sweetest princess, since God hath so highly favored thee as to lay his truth open to thee, and that thou knowest so many of those men who are now being burnt, there where thou art, to be entirely innocent, and to be undergoing torment in so many shapes for the sake of the

gospel of Christ, it is beyond question thy duty to show thy mind, either by pleading in their defence to the king, or by interceding with him for them. For if thou art silent or connivest at these deeds, and sufferest thy fellow-Christians so to be tormented and burnt, nor showest even by a word that it grieveth thee, thou seemest by that silence to be an accomplice in their slaughter, and to agree with the enemies of Christ. But perhaps thou wilt say, If I were to do that, I might draw on me the anger of the king and of my husband, and make myself many enemies; consider, then, that it is better for thee to be hated of man than of God, who can torment not the body, but the soul also, in eternal fire. If he be thy friend, none shall be able to harm thee, unless He permit it. For all things are in his hand. See that thou ponder these things in thy breast. Would that I might be well informed that thou art seriously cultivating piety and fearing God! Apply thyself diligently, I beseech thee, to Holy Scripture and to prayer. 'Whatsoever,' saith Christ, 'ye shall ask in my name of the Father, he will give it you.' Remember that thou wert born to die, and listen not to those who say, 'This life of ours is a very short one, therefore let us indulge our bent and enjoy this world's pleasure.' Rather listen to Paul, who says: 'If ye live after the flesh,' that is, if ye give yourselves to the pleasures of the body, 'ye shall perish everlastingly.' At another time I will write more to thee of the same purport, if I learn that my letter has been acceptable to thee; and I will take care

that little Christian books shall be conveyed to thee, if thou shalt prove willing to learn Christ. I have written all this under the constraint of intense love of thee. For since God hath called me to his high and heavenly kingdom, I desire above all things that thou shouldst be partaker of the same eternal blessing, which if I shall learn, as I wish that I may, to be the case with thee, I shall be delighted beyond measure, and render exceeding thanks to God. Farewell.

“HEIDELBERG, July 1, 1554.”





CHAPTER X.

Convocation of the States-General—The Arrest of Condé—
Death of Francis II.—Sir Nicholas Throckmorton.

UNDER the influence of opposite, though concurrent motives, the leaders of all the great rival parties in France unanimously advised the king to convene the States-General of the realm.

This was the counsel of the whole assembly of notables, summoned by the Guises to meet at Fontainebleau on the 21st August, 1560. At that assembly, through a manœuvre on the part of their rivals, neither the king of Navarre nor the prince of Condé was present. The brave Coligni, however, and his brothers were there, and the former fearlessly undertook to plead the cause of his persecuted fellow-Protestants. He presented a petition, praying that the rigorous penalties

denounced against "those of the religion," (as the Protestants were frequently styled,) might be suspended, and that they might be suffered to worship publicly in their own temples, instead of being compelled to have recourse to secret and illegal assemblies. He had the courage to declare that the true remedy for the perils of the state was the reformation of the church, and scrupled not to counsel that the guards by which the young king's person was surrounded should be dismissed, and that the States-General should be assembled.

The king's assent was proclaimed by an edict. In the meanwhile the vigilance of the Guises detected the formation of another conspiracy, not only against their authority, but against their lives. A messenger with letters was arrested, and full measure of blame was heaped upon the prince of Condé. More anxious than ever were his enemies to allure him to appear at the States-General. To effect this the king sent the Count de Crussol to invite him. The king of Navarre and Condé were at Nérac when thus summoned

to place themselves in the hands of their implacable foes. The queen of Navarre, with other female relatives of the Bourbon princes, besought them to avoid the snare, but in vain. They had both urged the French monarch to convene the States-General. With what plea could they decline to be present at its opening? Accompanied by a small body of retainers the two princes set out on their journey, and proceeded by slow marches towards the place of rendezvous.

The plot of the Guises was being carefully matured. Not only the Bourbon princes, but Coligni and D'Andelôt were to be numbered among the victims. Then was to follow a general extermination of the "heretics" throughout France, and even, if possible, in the neighboring states. But they designed that Condé should head the catalogue of the sacrificed. His prison was already prepared, and the decree for his arrest and condemnation was signed by the king and the lords of the court.

On the 29th October the Bourbon princes entered Orleans. From the coldness of their

reception, they might have anticipated something more than simply the convocation of the States-General of France. No one went out to greet their arrival. At the royal quarters, they were not suffered to ride into the courtyard, but were compelled to descend from their horses in the street, and to enter through a wicket which was opened to give them admission. And even here, neither knight nor noble appeared to welcome the first princes of the blood.

Ushered into the royal presence, they found Francis II. surrounded by the Guises and the captains of his guard; his demeanor spoke no friendly welcome either to Navarre or to Condé. Nevertheless the king himself conducted them to the cabinet of the queen-mother, who received them with marks of favor. "Then," says the historian, "the king turned towards the Prince of Condé, and complained in bitter terms that, although he had never inflicted on him either injury or ill-treatment, the prince, in contempt of laws human and divine, had several times stirred up his soldiers against him, had com-

menced civil war in several parts of the kingdom, had attempted to surprise his principal towns, and, in short, had plotted against his life and that of his brothers.

The brave Condé boldly replied that these were calumnies invented by his enemies, and that he could establish his own innocence.

“Well, then,” said Francis II., “to discover the truth, it will be necessary to proceed by the ordinary modes of justice.” And leaving the cabinet, he commanded the captains of the guard to make Condé prisoner.

The king of Navarre, though not absolutely placed, like Condé, under arrest, was in some respects treated as a prisoner; his secretary also was seized, and compelled to deliver up the letters and papers of his master.

A few days subsequent to the imprisonment of the prince, the Duchess Renée having just arrived from Ferrara, hastened to pay her respects to her grand-nephew, the young French sovereign. It would seem that Renée’s return to France was at an inauspicious moment for herself. To be forced to

leave Ferrara for religion's sake, and then to find on her arrival in her own country the cause with which she was now and henceforth to be identified so cruelly menaced, might have appalled one whose constancy was less mature; but it did not alarm Renée. On the contrary, she did not disguise her feelings, declaring that if she had arrived before Condé was imprisoned, she would have prevented it, and warning Guise to desist in future from offering violence to princes of the royal stock, for that such wounds would bleed long, and that it never ended well with any one who had been first in the assault upon chiefs of royal blood.

These brave words must have inspired the Huguenots with hope for the future. Notwithstanding, the Guises proceeded with those forms of justice by which they tried to disguise the malignant hate they cherished for the prisoner. The commission appointed to sit in judgment on the prince, comprised the first president of the Parisian Parliament, Christopher de Thou, Barthélemy Faye, Jacques Viole, Gilles Bourdin, and

Jean du Tillet. Even Chancellor l'Hôpital lent his influence, by accompanying them to the prison of the prince, for the purpose of interrogating him. In vain did Condé protest against the constitution of this commission, and appeal to be tried by the king, the peers, and the chambers of the Parliament assembled.

The day was fixed for Condé's sentence and execution, the Guises delaying the fulfilment of their sanguinary purpose only that they might secure a greater number of victims. The constable, however, was on his guard, and refused to come to Orleans. But the brave Coligni "committed the event to God," and continued his journey. How to rid themselves of the King of Navarre was the grand perplexity of the Guises. At length they contrived an expedient worthy of their character. They devised the assassination of Navarre by the hand of the young Francis II. But it is to the credit of the French king that his nature was not ferocious enough for the perpetration of such a deed.

But though the destruction of Condé ap-

peared inevitable, in spite of human justice and mercy, and the Duchess Renée's intervention, an invisible hand wrought for his deliverance. Death came to the rescue of the prisoner, but in a different way from his expectation, or his enemies' intention. Francis II. was the victim. The power of the Guises fell to the ground, and a cry which spoke condemnation both of the duke and the cardinal, arose through the whole of France.

Taking advantage of the moment, the duchess of Montpensier and the Chancellor l'Hôpital, interposed in behalf of Condé with the queen-mother. Catherine was a woman to be moved only by policy. She perceived that it was in her power to avail herself of the coöperation of the Bourbons against the ambition of the Guises. She was convinced that the life of Condé might be more serviceable to her than his death, and that with the aid of the two brothers, she might become the actual possessor of the chief power in the realm. In the mind of Catherine such considerations had sufficient weight to procure first, the suspension of pro-

ceedings in Condé's case, and subsequently, his release.

The States-General were opened at Orleans in December, by the new king Charles IX., a lad of ten years and a half. The name of Renée, duchess of Ferrara, is found in the list of royal personages who surrounded the young monarch on that occasion. During her abode at Orleans, the duchess sent for Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, that she might, through him, signify to his royal mistress the sentiments of esteem and admiration with which she regarded Queen Elizabeth. The record of the conversation at this interview, is contained in a despatch of the ambassador to the English queen. We venture to give it, as illustrative of the earnestness with which Renée now desired to further the cause of truth, being fully persuaded in her own mind, and no longer afraid to be known as an adherent of the Reformation.

“TO THE QUEEN'S MOST EXCELLENT MATIE.

“It may please your matie, synce my letters to the same of the thyrd of Januari, sent by De Fariory (?), the old dutchesse of Farare (off whose aryvall at thys

courte I did aduertise your matie before thys tyme) did send on off hys servants unto me with goode words of vystation; who desyrd me on hys behalffe to take the payns to come and vysyte hyr at hyr lodgings unto whom she then (as the messenger sayd) wold declare more off hyr mynd; wyche, accordyng to hyr own order, I dyd the vijth off Januuary. The dutchesse receavyd me wyth courtesy and goode words, and mayde me to sytt by hyr in a chayre, and sayd unto me, 'Mons^r l'Ambassador, bycause I have not the comoditie to let the quene your M^{rs}. knowe of my good wyll and affection to hyr, I have desyryed you to take the payns to come to me, as the best meyne to supplie the want, beyng here hyr ambassador.' 'I tell you, Mons. l'Ambassador,' she sayd, 'I doe hyr that reverence, bycause she is a quene that belong to her estate, and doth become me. But I love and honor [hyr] bycause she is, I here, a Christian and virtuous quene, and hathe in hyr realme advanced and set forthe the trew servysse, glorie, and honor off God, by whose good example and constance thereyn I trust other pryncis will be movyd to do the lyke; so as in thys latter tyme of the world, she may (be) reportyd of good ryghte, as good a mynster for the restoryng and restitution of God's word off long tyme bying oppressyd and darkenyd, as ether was Josias yn the putting forthe off the Old Testament or Constantyne the New.' 'Lo,' sayd she, 'what a Lord God is this that doth blemyshe the fame and estimation of the great men of the world through the doyings off a weake woman. All theyr victories and

conquests,' sayd she, 'doth give place to thyse your mystres' acts. And for thys virtuous entrepryse I note,' sayd she, 'how the Lord dothe blesse hyr, and give her muche felycitie. Fyrst, she hath the love and obedyence of her subgetts; she hath [from the] Lord goode successe against hyr enemies; she ys indued with many good gyftes; the grettest princis of Christendome dothe desyre hyr yn marriage. And on thing which ys specially to be notyd. She alone hathe done more than hyr syster could do, beyng alive, with on of the grettest pryncis of the world, yea, yn that wytche never none of her ancestors could ever bring to passe. For by occasion of hyr relygion, she hath obtainyd the amytye of the realme of Scotland, and moreover thereby she hathe won the favor of a grette many yn everie contrie. This prosperitie,' she sayd, 'Mons. l'Ambassador, ys of many folks moche regardyd, insomoe as I judge theyre be many of sondry estates, yea, yn those that be not of hyr relygion, that ar perswaded that the Lord dothe sustayne her and prosper hyr proceedyngs, and theyrby are more inclynyd to give care to the treuthe.' 'I thynke,' sayd she, 'the quene-mother, beyng a virtuous and sage lady, dothe begynn to herkynne to the treuthe, and can be contented that abusys be reformed in the churches of thys realme which,' sayd she, 'wold in my oppinion, take better effect yff the quene your M^{rs}. would use some persuasions either by wryting or otherwyse unto hyr. You will not believe,' sayd she, 'the goode towardness that ys in the kyng for hys age, and yt were grett pytie that he

should not be instructed in the treuthe, seyng so good a dysposition and so grett a spryte be mette in hym together. And as the quene your mystres is the principall mynyster of the advancement off the kyngdome of God and hys word yn hys own realme, and in the realme of Scotland, so may she be the anchor of the same grace, il she wyll, in this realme, and so consequently through all Europe. For,' said she, 'if thys realme be converted, all other contrees wyll embrace the same relygion.' I answered 'that I was well assuryd your ma^{tie} wold verie thankfully accept her goode affection, and gladly embrace hyr amytye yn respecte of her vertew, wysdom, and estate. But I thought thys should be to your ma^{tie} most acceptable, that she dyd grounde hyr goode wyll upon the occasion of relygion, your ma^{tie} esteeming that the beste and most perfecte amytye which proceeded from that fondation. And I dyd assuer hyr to advertyse your ma^{tie} by my next dyspatche of hyr good mynd and the reasons off ytt.'

"The sayd duchesse sayd unto me, 'Mons. l'Ambassador, you for your owne parte may do some goode yn the matter. For when occasions be offeryd you to have conference with the quene-mother, you may use some perswasions unto hyr to induce her thereto. Theyre is,' sayd she, 'no meyns so certayne and so goode to establyshe a perfect and assuryd amytye betwyxte France and England, as an amytye in religgion, and by thys meyns,' sayd she, 'you shall do youre dutie to God, and your M^{rs},' and hyr realme, good servyce.' I sayd to the duchesse

that 'I had a goode wyll to employ all that was yn me to so goode a conclusion. But I dyd se yn the contrayrie religgion [that] unitie did not allways occasion amytye.' 'That showeth,' sayd the duchesse, 'the spryte of that religgion to be the spryte off error. But,' sayd she, 'Mons. l'Ambassador, that dyscord ys not amongste those that profess the treuthe.' I answered that, 'as thys day yn all estates the case of relygion was estemyd so to touche the polycie (wheareoff in other pryncis' contres ambassadors ought to speak warely) as I dyd take myselffe not to be a fytt instrument to have to do in that matter. But rather thoughte that she (beyng the king's nere kynswoman, and no stranger, and yn credytte with the quene-mother, the kyng of Navarr, and all other grett personages of thys realme, the duke of Guise havynge here in this courte a grett authorytie, beyng hyr son-yn-law) was in my opynyon a most convenient meyne to worke in the matter; and methought,' I sayd, 'she could not but grettly promote the matter whyche she dyd so moche dessyr the advancement off. I sayd hyr words must be taken to procede only off zeale off relygion and tranquillytie off the realme. Peradventure an embassador's words (how well soweever they were ment) should have another interpretation,' She sayd, 'Mons. l'Ambassador, you know what you have to do, but I thynke whatsoweever the quene your M^{rs}. shall do in the matter, or whatsoweever you shall say, cannot but take goode effecte.' Then she sayd, 'besyds these respects that dothe move me to love and honor the quene your M^{rs}.,

wheareoff I have alredy spokyne to you, theyre is another cause wyche, though yt be off les wheight, dothe worke yn me a parciall goode wyll towards hyr. Theyre was an old auquayntance betwyxte the quene hyr mother and me, when she was on off my syster-quene Claude's mayds of honor.' I did tell the duchesse that I would not forgett to advertysse your mat^{ie} of all that she sayd unto me. And so after a few obsequious words I took my leave of her. While the duchesse of Farare and I talked together, the duchesse of Guise, hyr daughter, came ynto the chamber. It may please your mat^{ie} at the next dyspatche to gratifie the sayd duchesse off Farare ether with your letters or some other vysytation on your behalf.

[Dated from Orleans, the 10th of January, 1560, (61,) and signed,]

“Your mat^{ie} most humble, faythf^{ll},

“Obedient servant and subgett,

“N. THROKMORTON.”





CHAPTER XI.

The Triumvirate—Colloquy of Poissy—The Edict of January—The Massacre of Vassy—Montargis—Malicorne.

FROM Orleans King Charles, with his court, proceeded to Fontainebleau. Duchess Renée was still with the king. Fortune continued to smile on the rival House of Bourbon. The prince of Condé presented himself at Fontainebleau, when a decree of the council speedily relieved him from the sentence which had hung over his head ever since his arrest at Orleans. The king of Navarre won from the queen-mother the office of lieutenant-general of France. But new troubles were impending; the Guises were too strong to yield their position without a struggle. The jealous old Constable de Montmorency joined himself to the duke's party, and the Marshal St. André

offered his assistance, "for the defence of the Catholic religion," an alliance which procured for its chiefs the name of "The Triumvirate." The Parliament, formerly so liberal in its religious tendencies, breathed a spirit of intolerance. It desired to revive the ancient ordinances against heretics, and even accused the queen-mother of betraying both the religion and the laws of the kingdom, by permitting men to reënter her councils who had abjured the faith of their fathers.

Its harsh policy triumphed in an edict which declared the celebration of religious worship by the Protestants to be punishable with death and confiscation of goods. One clause alone, which prohibited domiciliary visits of an inquisitorial character, tended to afford some alleviation of its vexatious tyranny.

The Duke of Guise was loud in his exultation. But Coligni and the Huguenots protested against the least encroachment on the scant measure of toleration which they had enjoyed since the beginning of the year. Nor did popular opinion stamp its approval on the course which the Parliament had taken. The

celebrated Colloquy of Poissy, in which the cardinal of Lorraine and Theodore Beza consented to meet each other in order to discuss the doctrine of the Eucharist, seemed to promise the introduction of a milder spirit into religious controversy.

At this period more than two thousand reformed congregations existed in the kingdom. In the territory of Navarre, the cause of the Reformation was warmly cherished and promoted. The noble Jeanne d'Albert was no waverer between two opinions, like her husband; and the indomitable courage displayed by her in behalf of the cause she had espoused, stood out in remarkable contrast to his vacillating weakness. Into the mind of her son Henry she infused a zeal and an earnestness that fitted him in a great degree for the leadership of the French Huguenots, a post of honor and of difficulty which he well sustained. Jeanne was worthy of her mother Marguerite de Valois. The Duchess Renée knew them well, and valued each very highly. In a letter to Calvin she says: "The queen of Navarre was the first princess of this kingdom

who favored the gospel." Of Jeanne, Renée commends "the good zeal and the good judgment," adding with affectionate warmth, "I love her with a mother's love, and praise the graces which God has bestowed upon her."

It is impossible to ascertain the precise time when Renée took up her abode at Montargis after her return from Italy. It would seem that this city did not form part of her marriage dower, but, being assigned to her in compensation for any conceivable claims which she might prefer to her ancestral rights, it became the home of her widowhood. Not alone as the home of Renée, but a century later as the birthplace of Madame Guyon, Montargis is deservedly dear to us.

In the old Castle of Montargis, situated about sixty miles in a southeasterly direction from Paris, and bordered by an extensive forest, we find Renée endeavoring to improve the people by whom she was surrounded. The revenue derived from Montargis was very small, and was entirely absorbed by the expenses contingent on the troubles of those times. The castle, however, afforded a shel-

ter during the tempest of civil wars, a shelter that its mistress was always ready to share with the poor and down-trodden Reformists.

At the commencement of the year 1562, Catherine de' Medici, with the coöperation of L'Hôpital, convoked at St. Germain an assemblage of deputies from the eight parliaments of France. These deputies were chosen by the chancellor himself, and their concurrence in the measure of toleration which he designed to establish by their means could therefore be relied upon. The result was "The Edict of January," which granted permission to the Huguenots to assemble for worship in fields without the towns, and placed these assemblies under the protection of the law.

Acceptable as this tolerant decree must have been to the Huguenots, they were still far from being allowed to enjoy in peace the liberty of worship that it proclaimed to them. The Parliament of Paris refused to register the edict; nor did it comply until after repeated commands from the queen-mother. Meanwhile the sky was darkening. Pope

Pius IV. and Philip II., king of Spain, were alike enraged at the repeated conferences with the Protestants. Not discussion, but extermination, was their remedy for religious divisions. And the apparent defection of the queen-mother from the Catholic cause gave pretext to some of its more zealous advocates to open a treasonable correspondence with the court of Spain. The Cardinal Ippolito d'Este had succeeded in winning over Antoine of Navarre from the Huguenot to the Catholic party. Antoine pretended to have been convinced of the fallacy of the arguments in behalf of the reformed doctrine by the Colloquy of Poissy, but the true motive must be traced to the lure held out to him of the possible restoration of that part of his ancient kingdom which Spain had formerly wrested from the Navarre dominions, and held with unrelaxed grasp ever since.

Overcome by this temptation, the king of Navarre sent his queen back to Béarn, dismissed Beza and the reformed preachers from his household, changed the preceptors of his son, quarrelled with the Chatillons, and even

went so far as to demand their dismissal from the court. This aroused Catherine's spirit, and in turn, she dismissed the Cardinal de Tournon, and commanded the Marshal St. André to take his departure to Lyons. He refused to obey. To free herself of his presence, Catherine removed with the king her son to the château of Monceaux in Brie.

The parliaments of Dijon and Aix refused to register the "Edict of January," and their disapprobation was followed in Burgundy and Provence by revolting cruelties practised on the unhappy Huguenots.

The Duke d'Aumale, governor of Burgundy, was little inclined to favor the government scheme of toleration. Still the queen-mother and the good Chancellor l'Hôpital flattered themselves that, weary of constant strife, the partisans of the two religions would become tolerant of each other's existence. They were deceived. Already the Triumvirate were preparing to assert the supremacy of the Catholic creed by open hostilities on the battle-field.

Being invited to return to Paris by the king of Navarre, their former foe and new ally, the

cardinal of Guise and his elder brother, Anna of Este's husband, who since his father's death hath taken the title of the Duke of Guise, set forth from the château of Joinville, and the next day arrived at Vassy. In this town a Huguenot congregation had been formed about six months previously, and it now comprised between eight and nine hundred people—a large proportion of the population of the place, which consisted of not more than three thousand souls.

On that fatal day they were assembling for their Sabbath worship without the walls, in obedience to the regulations of the new edict, and ignorant of the doom awaiting them. Unhappily, the sound of the bells which summoned the worshippers, attracted the attention of the travellers. Turning to the keeper of the hotel, one of them asked the meaning of the bells ringing at that particular hour in the morning. He was told that it was for the worship of the Huguenots, whereat the Duke of Guise, who overheard the reply, exclaimed, with an oath, "We will Huguenot them presently after another fashion."

The duke and his armed escort hastened at once to the barn where the simple service of the Huguenots was proceeding. The congregation, knowing that they had the sanction of the new edict, turned out the intruders, and fastened the door against them. But the soldiers of Guise speedily broke through the insufficient barrier, and began to discharge their pistols and harquebusses among the terrified people. A stone thrown in self-defence by one of the Huguenots, struck the duke on his cheek, and caused the blood to flow. This was the signal for an indiscriminate slaughter. Sixty-four persons were slain, either in the barn, or while endeavoring to effect their escape, and more than two hundred were grievously wounded. In this outrage, as in the executions which followed the discovery of the "Conspiracy of Amboise," the only voice of mercy was that of Anna d'Este, duchesse of Guise, who chanced to be accompanying her husband.

Tidings of this dreadful event were not long in reaching Montargis. Immediately Renée gave command that the gates of the town

should be guarded, without preventing the ingress or egress of either Catholic or Huguenot. The duchess had good cause for precautionary measures. The seditious temper of the townspeople was instantly aroused at the sound of strife abroad in the land. The head forester of Montargis was the leader of the disaffected on this occasion. "He was secretly favored by some of the magistrates, who caused a report to be circulated, that they of the religion would come and throw down the images on the night of the Ascension."

Under color of this pretext, they placed in the church a garrison of thirty men in corslets, armed with lances and harquebusses. On the eve of the Ascension this number was doubled, their design being to issue from the church at midnight, and to cut the throats of all the Protestants on whom they could lay hands in the town. "But God willed it," continues the historian of the Reformed churches of France, "that madame being warned thereof, should break this blow, roughly menacing him whom she ought to

have had hung, and prohibiting, by the town-bailiff, the assemblage of persons either by day or night, under pain of corporal punishment. Nevertheless, so far were the mutinous from receding on that account, that the next day, at seven o'clock in the evening, from six to seven hundred of them assembled at the temple [church] with such arms as they could get, and with noise louder than the sound of the tocsin, they rushed to the house of a poor blind innkeeper, intending to kill him. The wretched man hastened to hide himself in the loft, but his wife, also aged, was wounded on her chin with a blow from a stick, and, after being cruelly mutilated, was left for dead."

The "Dame de Montargis" had need of nerve among such men of violence. They were not appeased with the blood of a poor old woman, and from the house of the innkeeper they betook themselves to the dwelling of the town-bailiff, whose profession of the reformed doctrine had made him unpopular, insincere as that profession afterwards proved to be. But the bailiff's house was

better defended than the former, and they were repulsed. The uproar soon reached the ears of the duchess, who sent down from the château some of the gentlemen of her household to appease the tumult, to the great peril of their lives. "Nevertheless," adds the historian, "that gave some respite to those of the religion; they kept themselves on their guard, while Madame, having sent in all haste to the prince [of Condé] at Orleans, obtained from thence some horse and foot-soldiers, who, on their arrival, disarmed the seditious by her command, their arms being carried into the castle. Some of them were imprisoned, whereof three were hung by sentence of the provost-marshal, and the rest were set at liberty sometime afterwards, through Renée's clemency."

The prompt measures and firm attitude of the duchess in the midst of these alarming circumstances, and her wisely-mingled administration of justice and mercy after the tumult was suppressed, were followed by the happiest results. Her Romanist subjects learned that their lady would suffer no intolerance,

and that she was resolved to uphold her authority in Montargis. So that while without its walls all was agitation, a perfect tranquillity reigned within, and "Montargis became a place of refuge for the Huguenots from several parts of the kingdom, as from Paris, Melun, Nemours, Louis, Sens, Blois, Tours; nay, even of many of the Roman religion flying from the tumults of war, of which this good duchess received several terrible assaults, after that the prince, seeing the army of his enemies approaching Orleans, had sent to recall all his men."

The patience of the Huguenots had been exhausted by the massacre of Vassy. Nothing seemed to be left for them but an appeal to arms. Calvin, indeed, had distinctly enjoined the duty of passive endurance of oppression, and condemned an armed defence of the rights of conscience. But the Protestants attempted to justify themselves. They had also a prince of the blood-royal for their leader. "The blood of the martyrs is" indeed "the seed of the church." But the seed which fructifies to such a harvest is the

blood of patient souls, "led as sheep to the slaughter."

The fine saying of Beza in reply to the King of Navarre, who was justifying the Duke of Guise in the matter of Vassy, deserves to be remembered. "Sire, it is true that it is the part of the church of God, in whose behalf I speak, to endure blows, not to give them—but, may it please you to remember, that it is an anvil which hath worn out many hammers."

A few months later, when the war had begun in earnest, the royal army on its return from the siege of Bourges passed through Montargis, thereby causing much terror to the Protestant inhabitants of the place. The duchess was no less anxious for the safety of the poor Huguenots and their families, exposed to the insults of an inflamed soldiery, under the leadership of merciless men. She advised the reformed minister of Montargis to withdraw to a château whose owner was friendly to the persecuted. The Castle of Montargis was filled to overflowing, and resembled a hospital. It is possible that this

spectacle moved even their enemies to compassion. The cardinal of Lorraine and Madame de Guise, who were with the advanced guard of the army, were the first to arrive at Montargis. They strove to allay the fears of the duchess on behalf of her people, by assuring her that they desired the arrest of no one on account of his religion, but merely of rebels who were occupying the towns of the king. After the cardinal and the Duchess of Guise, came the young king, followed by the Duke of Guise. Charles "caressed much the lady, his aunt, kissing her several times and shedding tears." But surrounded by his friends, it was impossible for Duchess Renée to converse with him with regard to his will in these matters.

Meanwhile the army quartered in the town of Montargis justified the dread with which its arrival had been apprehended. The Huguenots, indeed, were out of the reach of its fury, but the bloodthirsty soldiers wreaked their vengeance on the Protestant church, tearing down seats and demolishing the pulpit, and reërecting as many images and altars

as they could find, in the places whence the zeal of the Reformed had removed them. Those, too, who had been banished from Montargis, availed themselves of this opportunity to return, uttering menaces against such as were beyond the reach of their hate; which state of things being reported to Renée, she promptly obtained from the king a proclamation, by the sound of a trumpet, that no outrage should be offered to any partisan of either creed, under penalty of death.

But the peace of the good duchess was much troubled by this visitation. For the Duke of Guise, although Renée was his mother-in-law, deprived her of the guardianship of Montargis, and committed it to an archer of the guard, an apostate from the Reformed religion, and on that account favored by the duke. The duchess was also forbidden to admit her own domestics to hear the instruction of the Huguenot ministers, but this decree was of short continuance.

The boldest attack on Renée was made early in 1563, during the siege of Orleans.

Success appeared ready at last to crown the ambition of the Duke of Guise. The king of Navarre was dead of a wound received at Rouen, the Prince of Condé was a prisoner. The constable was a prisoner in the hands of the enemy, shut up in Orleans, so that everything seemed to be in the power of the duke. Having therefore no cause to dread being called to account for what he might choose to do, he gave orders in the council, in the king's name, that the Duchess Renée should be removed from Montargis, and be required to take up her abode in one of three prescribed palaces. The plea of "the king's service," colored this odious rescript; the town and castle of Montargis being, as the duke declared, "of very great importance."

Poulin, Baron de la Garde, was charged with the execution of this commission, by letters express from the queen mother. The Sieur de Malicorne followed in his steps with four companies of horse, to strike terror into the heart of the duchess, and to compel her to instant submission. The townspeople opened the gates to Malicorne on his arrival,

and the populace began to rage with increased audacity.

From the windows of her château Renée looked down on the furious mob and the brutal soldiery. They were wreaking a pitiful vengeance on a poor Huguenot whom they had dragged from his sick bed and were beating without mercy. In desperation, to free himself from his tormentors, the miserable sufferer threw himself into the river, when a "harquebusade" was opened upon him, and he was finally despatched by dagger wounds. But there was no terror in the heart of the duchess. Her reply to the summons of surrender was as fearless as it was decisive. She said that she saw plainly that it was not for the king's service they wished to dislodge her; that there was no ground for the allegation that Montargis was a place of great importance, because neither the town nor the castle was tenable against an assault, without great repairs, and that injury to the king's cause could not proceed from a place which was already in the hands of an archer of the royal guard, who had

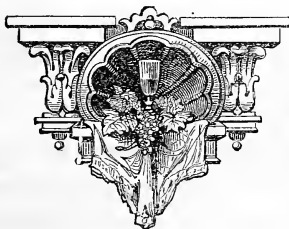
been left by Guise in charge of it. And she denied that there was a single person in the château who was not, and had not ever been, the king's very humble servant. She represented that to place her in any one of the prescribed palaces, which were unfortified, and two of which were at the very gates of Paris, would expose her to the risk of slaughter, which she had not merited, and which she well knew that the king her nephew did not intend. And therefore she desired to be more fully informed of the king's will, and prayed Poulin to return to the court with a gentleman of her party, for the better understanding thereof.

During the absence of Poulin on this errand, Malicorne, eager to prove himself the devoted follower of Guise, presumed to menace the Duchess Renée, in the hope of bringing her to unconditional obedience. He threatened an assault of the citadel by a storming party with battering engines, and even went so far as to apply to the Sieur de Biron for some pieces of cannon which he had brought from Paris to the siege of Or-

leans. Renée answered the upstart right royally, bidding him beware what he did, for that no one throughout the realm of France had any authority over her but the king. And she assured him that if he came against her castle with artillery, she would take her stand upon the breach, and would try, at the risk of her life, whether he or any beside him, was so foolhardy as to dare to slay the daughter of the best and mightiest of kings. She added, that "she had no lack of friends and relatives, who would avenge with spirit any injury done to herself, on the persons of those who should incur such serious guilt, and would inflict punishment of the most signal kind, not only upon them, but upon their children, even on their very babes in the cradle."

Malicorne, who looked not for such an answer, quailed before the stern determination of the woman, and forbore to proceed to violent measures. Before any further molestation reached Renée, tidings came that the Duke of Guise was mortally wounded. On receiving this message Malicorne hastened

back to Orleans. And "thus," concludes the chronicler, "was Montargis preserved, with those who had retired thither, each of whom returned afterwards to his house, in hope of the enjoyment of the edict of peace." There was a lull in the tempest, but the clouds were still threatening.





CHAPTER XII.

Assassination of the Duke of Guise—Coligni, Soubise, and Beza accused of Complicity—Calvin's Influence—Steps taken by the House of Guise—Calvin's Letter—A Glimpse of Renée's Inner Life.

THE assassination of the Duke of Guise, while it delivered the Protestants of France from a sanguinary enemy, bore bitter fruit afterwards. The murderer accused Coligni, Soubise, and Beza, of complicity in the deed of blood. They indignantly repelled the accusation. Coligni, indeed, while proving that he had not in the least had to do with it, admits that he was aware of the threats of Poltrôt, whom, however, he regarded as a vain braggart. But on his life and honor, he declared that he had neither induced, solicited, nor sought for any one to act the part of a murderer, by

words, money, or promises. Yet there were those among the Huguenots who lauded the bloody undertaking; and we cannot sufficiently deplore the fierce excitement of men's minds in that stormy period, which led even good men to excuse or palliate these unlawful deeds under the plea of self-defence. "More than once it was Calvin himself who held back the hands of those who longed to embrue them in the blood of François de Guise, the ruffian of Vassy."

"I can protest," he wrote to the Duchess of Ferrara, "that it was entirely owing to me that, before the war began, men of daring courage had not tried to rid the world of him; they were held back solely by my exhortations."

The Duchess of Guise, adopting the suspicion that Coligni had incited Poltrôt to murder her husband, now presented a request to the council of the king that the admiral should be placed on his trial before the said council. When Coligni heard this, he set out from Châtillon-sur-Loing, with a retinue of six hundred gentlemen, and directed his steps

to St. Germain's, where the court then was, to the great alarm of the queen-mother. Catherine prayed Condé to go to meet the admiral, and induce him to return home with his retinue. D'Andelôt, the admiral's younger brother, however, presented himself before the council alone, and protested that the deposition of Poltrôt was false and calumnious, being made under the pressure of frightful torture. Nevertheless, the Duchess Anna and the family of Guise would not consent to forego their demand for vengeance upon the admiral.

The formal consideration of this request had been postponed by the king, while yet a minor. But as soon as the majority of Charles IX. had been declared, the Guises resolved to urge their suit again. Antoinette de Bourbon, mother of the late duke, and Anna d'Este, his widow, presented themselves before the king in long black robes. They were followed by the children of François de Guise, also by veiled women, who made the air resound with their cries and groans, and by all the relatives and friends of the

family clad in mourning. The two duchesses threw themselves at the feet of the king on their knees, crying "justice." The king promised them "justice," and consented that the Parliament of Paris should entertain the question; but the Cardinal de Châtillon protested against the trial of Coligni by judges whose partiality was well known, and who were already swayed by their prejudices in all matters affecting a Huguenot. The king commanded that the decision should be suspended for three years. But the subject was not permitted to rest. The ambassadors of the pope, the emperor and the king of Spain, had audience of Catherine at Fontainebleau, addressing her a solemn invitation to be present at Nancy, where also the other Christian princes would be assembled to take cognizance of the canons of the council of Trent; to swear to observe them, and to come to mutual understanding as to the means to be employed everywhere, and at the same time for the destruction of heresy. They urged that the king should pursue with the utmost vigor the authors and accomplices of the detestable

assassination of the Duke of Guise; and lastly, that he should abstain from alienating the goods of the clergy, inasmuch as the king of Spain and the Duke of Savoy had no desire to be paid their wives' dowry with money derived from such a source. They offered, also, for the accomplishment of these objects, to succor the king with all the forces of their respective states. It is probable, says the historian Sismondi, that the principal end of the pope and the king of Spain in sending this solemn embassy, was to compromise the king with his Protestant subjects. Catherine saw the snare and avoided it, by dictating a reply to her son which defined nothing, and left him unfettered. There was no conference in Lorraine on the day which the ambassadors had appointed.

The quarrel between the Châtillons and the Guises came to a satisfactory settlement in 1566, at Moulins. The admiral cleared himself by oath from the murder of Duke François. Thereupon Anna d'Este and the cardinal of Lorraine, by command of the king, embraced the admiral, and the reconciled

parties mutually promised to nourish resentment against one another no longer. But the young duke Henry de Guise, and D'Aumale, his uncle, had no share in this ceremony. On the fatal day of St. Bartholomew, Guise and his band of assassins gratified their revenge with the blood of Coligni.

The Duchess de Guise had long retained the early bias of her mind towards the Reformed; even the cardinal of Lorraine once declared that "he knew his sister-in-law was a Protestant, and that she caused his son to be privately instructed in the Augsburg Confession." But from the time of her husband's murder a change passed over her, and she became inimical to the struggling cause. The Roman-catholic ladies of the court regarded her as their leader, and Calvin, in a letter to Renée, complains of the course of action pursued by Madame de Guise, and entreats the maternal interference. We copy it, as showing the tenderness of the Reformer, and his unwillingness to lose an opportunity to employ his influence where possible good could be effected.

“MADAME: I am rejoiced to have an opportunity of writing to you with safety by the bearer; not that I have any great matter at this time, but that I may acquit myself of my duty, and also because I think that my letters are always welcome to you through your favor, when they can minister to your profit. I would, moreover, take pains to convey them to you more frequently, but that you have, thank God, in your household, one competent to exhort you, and to confirm you, whereinsoever you have need. I have no tidings to send you which you do not know already, especially none which would give you joy; and I love not to vex you, although I am constrained to unburden my heart, not without great regret, of a grief which is common to all the children of God. You know, madame, what the enemies of the truth are plotting: witness the league of the pope with the king of Spain, the Venetians, and potentates of Italy, in which our neighbor is comprehended; it seems, indeed, to them that they ought to exterminate all Christianity from the world. Meanwhile Madame de Guise takes a course which can only result in her confusion if she persevere, for though she thinks not of it, she seeks the ruin of the poor churches of France, of whom God will be the protector, and uphold their cause. I protest once more, madame, that I would willingly abstain from wearying you, but on the other hand, I greatly desire that she may be induced by your authority to moderate her passions, which she can only obey as she does, by fighting against God. I tell you frankly, madame, what every one knows,

that you may consider, according to your discretion, what good expedient to provide in order to persuade her not to conspire with those who only seek to abolish pure religion, and not to entangle herself in devices of which the issue can only be calamitous, inasmuch as they are contrary to God. Madame, after having very humbly recommended myself to your good grace, I will supplicate our heavenly Father to keep you always in his protection, to strengthen you with his might, and to increase you in all wealth and prosperity.

“From Geneva, this”

The death of the Duke of Guise, as we have seen, relieved the Duchess Renée from a perplexing, if not a dangerous position; yet her perceptions of a Christian's duty were too clear to be confused by the passionate excitements of the age of civil war. Yet her relationship to Guise, and her desire that his character should be fairly dealt with, seem to have caused a misunderstanding in the minds of some of the Huguenot party; and thus one who had already suffered, for conscience's sake, was made to feel the bitterness of censure from those whose religious creed was the same as her own. A very long letter from Renée to Calvin, in the manuscript collection

of Dupuy, which has been assigned to the year 1563, throws much light upon the difficulties of her position, and gives a graphic illustration of the petty annoyances to which she was subjected. After making known to Calvin the reason why she had left the royal court, and discoursing of certain matters touching the church consistory, she adds :

“M. CALVIN : I am sorry that you do not know how half the world conducts itself in this kingdom, nor the habits of adulation and of ill-will which prevail in it, even to the exhorting simple young women to say that they should like to kill and strangle with their own hands. That is not the rule which Jesus Christ and his apostles have given us ; and I say it with all the great regret of my heart, on account of the affection which I bear to religion and to those who bear its title, of all whom I do not speak, but of a great part of those whom I know among them. And if they should be inclined to say that what I assert is dictated by passion for my late son-in-law it is well-known that I never was so passionately fond of him as of my own children ; and those who accuse me have not, perchance, considered the proof which I have given of my sincerity by having left them, to follow the path and way which God has taught me, and the journeys by which he has directed me. But I see that there are people who are disposed to take the side and adopt the passions of others, without

considering whether they proceed from God or not, and to twist and pull Holy Scripture to the string of their bow, which they themselves have woven, and in which course they will at last stumble. And I see that they are minded to continue always lying and slandering, making their delight of it, and that such people give you to understand that a thing is different from what it is. I beg you, M. Calvin, to make prayer to God that he would show you the truth of all things, as I declare it to you, so far in so many matters, as I still entertain hope that by you he will expose these hidden workings of malice which I see prevail in this age of the world, which state of things makes me not only fear and have misgivings, lest the chastisement of God fall on those of his church, but makes it seem to me that they are, as it were, manifest. I may add that I have never requested nor sought for the ministers from whom I have heard such suggestions, to pray for me as for others, and I leave always at liberty and to the conscience of every one the making prayer; and as to those to whom I give, it would seem as if I wished myself recompensed, if I bade them pray for me. Nevertheless, I cease not to pray particularly for those whom it seems to me well-pleasing to God that I should pray for, specially for those who are of the household of faith, and those who publish the word of God, and for the king whom God has given us, and princes, lords, and judges of the earth, because God has commanded it, and in order that all may 'lead a quiet and peaceable life,' not only in the peace which the world

gives, but in that which our Lord has left to us, and I am not one of those who pray, or who cause prayer to be made, for those who are no longer in this world. I know well that there are those who say, that all those who are against (the Reformed) religion, are the bad characters, (among men.) I grant it, but I do not know whether God may not be pleased to call them. I have no business to complain of them, and in myself, I know before God that there are too many defects and sins ; but before his creatures, God commands us to give testimony of our manner of living, and to proceed, as I am ready to do, if it shall please God ; and as to what I have heard of what is charged upon the ministers and children of God, I have not held my peace, but have taken on me to protect them with more care than I have taken to protect myself. And I know that there are those who endeavor to banish them from this kingdom, for which reason it seems to me that one ought not to yield occasion for the accomplishment of the designs of those who wish to drive them away, which has caused me to be prolix in this letter and in some others which I have from time to time written you, which I have begged you to burn, as also I beg you to do with this present letter, and to continue to write to me and freely communicate what shall seem good to you, which I shall always hear and receive willingly. With this I shall conclude, praying to God, M. Calvin, to keep you in his holy and worthy guardianship.

“Yours, very truly,

“RENÉE OF FRANCE.”



CHAPTER XIII.

Reconciliation of Coligni with the House of Guise—The Marriage of the Duchess Anna to the Duke de Nemours—Death of Calvin—Letter from the Reformed Church at Antwerp—The arrival of Alva—The Massacre of Orleans.

THE reconciliation at Moulins between Coligni and the Duchess de Guise was hastened, perhaps, by reason of her impending marriage with Jacques de Savoy, duke de Nemours. Her obligation to the memory of her former husband had been fully discharged. Coligni had purged himself in the most solemn manner from the reproach under which he had labored of being the author of that foul murder. No further demand of "justice" could be made, and the duchess had already given her affections to one, said to be in every way worthy of her. It was a marriage which highly gratified the queen-mother and Charles IX. The nuptials were

celebrated by the Cardinal of Lorraine. Renée was not present; and the Queen of Navarre quitted the court, by reason of the injustice done to her relative Françoise de Rohan, a lady whom the Duke of Nemours had once pledged himself to marry.

In anticipation of the union of Anna d'Este with the Duke of Nemours, Catherine addressed a letter to Renée, assuring her therein, "that both she and the king her son, will take good care that there shall be nothing in the marriage contract injurious to the interests of the children of the Duchess of Guise, and that everything shall be arranged to the contentment of Renée, to whose inspection she promises to submit the marriage articles, before anything shall be done, in order that her will may be made known concerning them." The crafty Catherine avails herself of this opportunity to allude to "certain ministers touching whom, the constable will converse with her," and skilfully refers to "the love which the Duchess of Ferrara has for the laws and ordinances of the king my son," and to her desire "to be foremost in setting a good

example to others." What the issue of this embassy was we have not been told. But that the duchess did not deliver her ministers into the hands of the constable may be most surely believed. His friendship with the Châtillons doubtless caused him to be selected for this errand, Renée's regard for the admiral being no secret. The intolerance of the court had been already manifested at Moulins in the attempt to arrest the Protestant minister of the Queen of Navarre. Besides, there is little doubt that a general massacre of the Huguenots was already planned, and that Moulins would have been the scene of those horrors afterwards enacted at Paris in 1572, "only that Coligni and the other chiefs came well attended, and the bloody deed was therefore adjourned to a better opportunity."

Advanced in years and diseased in body, Renée was called to bear still another trial. This was the death of her friend and spiritual father, John Calvin. From the time when the Reformer met the duchess in Ferrara, he had not ceased to write to her, and there can be no doubt that Renée sincerely mourned

the bereavement caused by his death. It is possible that his counsel was not in all practical matters adhered to. Still, the earnest convictions of so vigorous a mind must have been a powerful support to Renée in many a trying hour. How striking are the words of faith which are found in the last testament of this godly man: "With my whole soul I embrace the mercy which He has exercised towards me through Jesus Christ atoning for my sins, with the merits of his death and passion, that in this way he might satisfy for all my crimes and faults, and blot them from his remembrance."

But the personal influence of Calvin was not needed to hold the Duchess Renée to the faith, nor did the cessation of his earnest motions render her one whit the less desirous for its establishment among those over whom her legitimate influence extended. Everywhere it was known that she longed for the success of the cause of truth and righteousness, and that her aid might be invoked in its behalf, not only in her own, but also in foreign lands. Of this there is interesting evidence

in a letter addressed to her by the ministers of the Reformed church at Antwerp.

“MADAME: Inasmuch as we doubt not that you are well-informed by the report of several trustworthy persons, of what is the present condition of these low countries, and how necessary it is at this time to labor there for the glory of God—(of which you have ever shown yourself the faithful and affectionate guardian in all your household, and the notable patron to all those without)—moreover, the gentleness and kindness which are natural to you, the fruit of so many excellent gifts which it hath pleased the Lord to impart unto you, for the joy and edification of his people, are sufficiently known to us. We have made bold to write to you this present epistle to entreat your excellency to accord us this favor, which shall be to the great profit and advantage of all the country, as we hope that our brother and companion in the work of the Lord, M. Pierius, may, by your means, and with your permission, come here and help us in pursuing this work, which it has pleased God to commence on this side, and that we also may communicate with him and find consolation in the Lord. For, notwithstanding that in the present day many learned men are found to whom such numerous graces have been imparted by the goodness of God, that we have occasion continually to thank him therefor; nevertheless, there are many reasons which lead us to seek this benefit from your excellency, and we hope that they will weigh with you, that you may

grant it to us the more freely. Especially as we desire to have a man, not only of learning and authority, but likewise of counsel, who by the usage and experience of things past, might help us, and direct our course to some better furtherance, by this blessing of the Lord; and this we have known him of a long season to possess, as he has shown in the great need and necessity of the parts in which he has been in France. Added to which, also, that he is one of the natural subjects of the king to whom we belong, which may be of great avail as well for the satisfaction and edification of this church in which he has long been known with great profit, as for the hinderance of those reproaches, scandals, and calumnies, wherewith the enemies of the truth commonly arm themselves in order to traduce the gospel and blaspheme the sacred name of God, as you know, madame, and have seen by so many examples, even in our own times. Having considered which, we have agreed to make known to you by letter our desire and intention, hoping that as the Lord has long given you grace to prove by a judgment truly royal and worthy of your line, so holy an affection, that also now you will effectually show in regard to our place that this same affection is neither grown cold, nor retarded by the distance of the country or other like hinderances, but rather increased by the contemplation of the growth and advancement of the kingdom of God, whom we pray, madame, after having presented to your excellency all obedience from your servants, that it may please him to increase you more

and more in his grace, and to endue you with his holy blessing from on high.

“From Antwerp, this Thursday, 28th May, 1566.

“Your humble and obedient servants,

(Signed,)

“THE MINISTERS OF THE

“CHURCH AT ANTWERP.”

Not only was Renée called upon to aid in the work of reform abroad, but Montargis continued to be a secure asylum for the persecuted Huguenots. The smouldering fires of civil war needed only a breath to fan them into a flame. The conduct of the queen-mother inspired the minds of the Reformed with utter distrust. “She was seen once more assisting with her sons at the ecclesiastical processions; she removed from the court all the ladies who had ceased to attend the Roman-catholic services and ceremonies; wherever the court appeared, no Protestant worship was permitted for many miles round. The Edict of Pacification was limited by partial arrangements, now in one way and now in another, without any respect to the complaints of the Huguenots, however well-grounded.”

The arrival of Alva in the Netherlands precipitated events. The government com-

menced arming, under pretext of being prepared against possible invasion by the formidable general of Philip II. A few weeks revealed the truth, that the new levies, both of French and Swiss soldiers, were designed to crush the Huguenots. These, in their turn, leagued and armed in secret, determined to take the initiative in offensive operations. They concerted to surprise the court during its sojourn at Monceau, and to get possession of the king. They hoped by this means to free him from the influence of the Cardinal of Lorraine, and to procure the dismissal of the Swiss. But the project failed. The court escaped to Meaux, and then the counsel of the Duke of Nemours decided the king to proceed at once to Paris. The duke made all the necessary arrangements, placing the king in the centre of the Swiss battalion, of which he took command. With such a force confronting him, the Prince of Condé was obliged to fall back, and the failure of this rash scheme rendered the situation of the Huguenots more perilous than before. L'Hôpital's influence was fruit-

less. Catherine was hostile, and civil war began. The battle of St. Denis, although contested warmly, was indecisive. Condé commanded the Huguenots, while the Constable de Montmorency commanded the army of the king and fell in the contest: religious zeal took the form of fanaticism, and the strife was so equally waged as to give neither party the hope of soon putting an end to the war. At last the Prince of Condé having received a strong military force, laid siege to Chartres, (Renée's duchy,) one of the granaries of Paris. But as soon as the hope of victory began to dawn on the Huguenots, the court resolved to delude them by overtures of peace. It offered the restoration of the former Edict of Pacification, but refused to grant guarantees of its performance. Condé and Coligni were not deceived by the demonstrations of the court, and represented to their followers the imprudence of lending ear to proposals which were only designed to beguile them to their more complete destruction. But they protested in vain. The Huguenot army and the German auxiliaries

loudly demanded the acceptance of the terms which the court had proposed to them.

Unhappily at this junction, the death of the wife of Coligni summoned him away to Châtillon-sur-Loing, where he had left her with their children, engaged, as we are told, in affectionate and intimate correspondence with her attached friend, the Duchess Renée, on matters of mutual interest. During the admiral's absence, the opposite counsels in the Huguenot camp prevailed. The treaty of peace was signed, in spite of his just misgivings, at Longjumeau, on the 20th March, 1568.

Nothing was further from the intention of the court than the observance of the terms on which peace had been concluded with the Huguenots. The pope, the King of Spain, and the Catholic princes of Europe, blamed Catherine de' Medici for the toleration accorded to the Reformed worship, in the renewal of the Edict of Pacification; but their censure was unmerited. Catherine was playing a game that seemed likely to prove a success. The Treaty of Longjumeau was a mere decep-

tion, intended to lull the Huguenots into security; that, when dispersed and disarmed, they might fall an easy prey to their enemies. The insincerity of the court was everywhere apparent. The Swiss troops were not sent back; the Reformed worship was interdicted in all places belonging to the queen-mother, her sons, or the Duke of Montpensier. The Duke of Nemours refused to execute the conditions of the treaty in Lyons and Grenoble. The pope praised him, and Catherine did not blame him for his disobedience. The Romanist populace committed frightful excesses, and massacre of the helpless Huguenots, in several important towns, remained unnoticed by the ministers of the law, and unpunished. The Chancellor l'Hôpital fell into disfavor with the court, for always insisting, in the council of the king, on the faithful observance of the treaties of peace. The seals were at last taken from him on the plea of his age, and given to another, Jean de Morvilliers. Condé and Coligni were commanded to repay to Catherine the sum of three hundred thousand crowns, which she

had advanced to the German auxiliaries of the Reformed, at the conclusion of peace. The money was to be paid from their own private means; they were forbidden to avail themselves of the liberality of the Reformed churches of France, for it was the ruin of the heads of the Huguenot party at which Catherine aimed. Had there been a doubt of the nature of her intentions, it was dissipated, when it became known that her ministers had demanded and obtained a bull from Rome, authorizing the sale of the temporalities of the French church, to the amount of one hundred and fifty thousand livres annually, the proceeds to be applied to the extermination of the Reformed religion and its professors.

Finally, Condé and Coligni received intelligence that their arrest had been determined upon, and that steps were being taken for their seizure. They immediately addressed a petition to the king, making known the grievances of the Huguenots, and the numerous violations of the recent treaty, the blame of which they threw upon the Cardinal of Lor-

raine alone. They then, by a rapid movement, effected their escape, with their families, to La Rochelle. On the other hand, the council of the king promulgated an edict at St. Maur, which the Parliament at once registered, prohibiting on pain of death and confiscation of goods the exercise of the Reformed religion throughout the kingdom. Its ministers were ordered to quit France within fifteen days, and it was declared that pardon to the Huguenots for their past errors should only be granted on condition of their abandoning them immediately. The edict attributed all past concessions to necessity, and asserted that they had been made against the will of the king, who had resolved on revoking them as soon as circumstances should permit. There remained no alternative to the Huguenots but an entire surrender, or again to resort to arms. They chose the latter.

The third war commenced under more favorable auspices than the preceding. The Duke of Anjou, the king's brother, commanded the Roman-catholic army, but did not offer

battle to the Huguenots through the winter of 1568-9. At last, on the 13th of March, the fatal battle of Jarnac deprived the Reformed of one of their gallant chiefs, Louis, prince of Condé. About two months later, D'Andelôt, brother of Coligni, died of fever. The admiral gained some slight advantage over the enemy at La Roche-Abeille, but suffered loss at the siege of Poitiers, which he was eventually obliged to raise. The disaster at Moncontour, where Coligni received three wounds and was defeated, seemed to crown the misfortune of the Huguenots. It was during this conflict, that Montargis ceased for awhile to be an asylum for the oppressed.

The massacre of the Reformed at Orleans in the year 1569, caused the flight of all who were of "the religion," especially the women and children, from the towns and villages of the flat country, to their once serene retreat, in the hope of refuge from the cruel strife which was raging around them. This last concourse of Protestants at Montargis, we are told, stirred up the preachers of Paris, and they the king, to force Renée to turn away

four hundred and sixty persons, of whom two-thirds were women, and children at the breast. We are not left to imagine the grief of Renée at the stern decree; it is described to us. "Bursting into tears, she said to Malicorne, who again appears as the disturber of her peace, that if she had on her chin what he had on his, she would kill him with her own hands, as a messenger of death."

The Duke of Alençon is said to have been active in this evil work; giving the duchess to understand that plots were daily hatched at Montargis against his majesty, and desiring her not only to dismiss the Reformed and their ministers, but to leave the exercise of the Reformed religion, or else to remove to some other place. Renée answered, "that she was too nearly related to the crown to be so ill-affected to it; that those to whom she gave a shelter were only a harmless and poor people, who meddled with nothing that could be of the least importance to the king's state; that she could not leave a place which belonged to her, and where she was resolved to live and die, without forsaking the exercise

of that religion which had been permitted to her by the king, and in which she had hitherto been brought up."

Brave as the answer, it was in vain. Renée was obliged to dismiss most of those helpless ones who had taken shelter at Montargis. All that she could do to alleviate the hardship of their lot, she did with the generous devotion of her own noble heart. "Forasmuch as there were several families, many women and a great number of young and of old people, all unable to go the long journeys they were forced to take, or else be at the mercy of those who waited only for an opportunity to destroy them, she furnished this distressed company with one hundred and fifty wagons, eight travelling coaches, and a great many horses—answering for the wagoners who carried the rest and their baggage."

They had, however, hardly passed the Loire, when fresh dangers menaced them. A captain of the Roman-catholic army, with a troop of two hundred soldiers, was sent to massacre them. The ministers who escorted the fugitives, perceiving on a neighboring hill

the approach of the enemy, threw themselves on their knees with their timid flock, exhorted them to die with constancy, and began to sing a hymn. Their confidence had its immediate reward. Suddenly from the opposite quarter there appeared between two hills a body of eight hundred horsemen, under command of the Captain Du Bec de Bourry, a Huguenot, who was on his way with his troop from Bourges to La Charité. He charged the foe unexpectedly, put them to flight, and escorted in safety to the latter place the trembling troop of fugitives from Montargis.

No wonder that Renée longed, and prayed, and labored for peace. The bravery and skilful generalship of Coligni raised the Huguenot cause from the lowest state of depression after the defeat at Moncontour. He was still enabled to maintain the struggle, for his name inspired confidence, and brave men rallied round him, proud to fight under so worthy a commander. An able writer says of him :

“He never, indeed, had that singular joyousness of spirits which Cendé had, but always a serene strength of heart, which per-

haps on the whole was as effective for himself and for others, the settled determination of a man who had counted the cost of his cause before he engaged in it, and was prepared to pay it to the uttermost." He wintered in Languedoc, and refused two several offers of peace from the court, because they would not concede sufficient toleration. But the court was weary of the war; the Huguenot party was stronger in the field than ever; and the king, impatient to commence a life of festivity and indulgence, was restrained by an impoverished treasury. He was jealous of his brother, the Duke of Anjou, and the other leaders of the Roman-catholic party were likewise jealous of each other. Their divisions aided the cause of peace, and Coligni having received guarantees of a satisfactory nature for the fulfilment of the treaty, signed it at La Charité on the 8th of August, 1570. A new Edict of Pacification, drawn up in conformity with the provisions of this treaty, was published, and immediately registered in all the courts of the kingdom. "It was more favorable to the Reformed than the preceding

ones. It gave them liberty of worship in all the places which were in their possession, and in addition, two towns of every province for the celebration of service; an amnesty for the past; equal right of admission to public offices; permission to reside in any part of the kingdom without being molested on account of religion, and four hostage-towns to be held by the Huguenot troops for two years—La Rochelle, La Charité, Cognac, and Montauban.

But though hostilities had ceased for a space, the two parties were not reconciled. The Reformed had suffered loss in moral force, in numbers, and in political influence, by the civil wars, and the bitter strife had deepened the hatred of their adversaries against them. Catherine was at no pains to conceal her enmity. Peace had been signed, but vengeance was meditated. The cruel counsel of the Duke of Alva had never been forgotten. "Kill the leaders, for ten thousand frogs are not worth the head of a salmon." Nevertheless a seeming calm prevailed, and the more unwary began to hope.

The Seventh National Synod assembled at La Rochelle in the spring of 1571. The chiefs of the Huguenots were present, and took part in the deliberations. From the business of this conference the venerable Coligny was summoned to the councils of Charles IX., who received him with every mark of respectful affection. Popular infractions of the Edict of St. Germain were duly furnished, but as time passed, less favorable indications manifested themselves. Meanwhile, Renée dwelt at Montargis, feeble in health and advanced in years, but still earnest as ever in desiring the instruction of ministers for herself and others. A glimpse of the duchess' inner life we obtain from the following letter addressed to her by a Huguenot minister named Toussain, which also throws a little light on the state of religion in Renée's neighborhood at the period in which it was written.

“MADAME: I believe that your excellency hears daily of the vexations which are practised on those who come hither from Orleans to hear the word of God, which cause has hindered me, and all the more

that I am alone, from travelling until now, for if the means of doing so had not been cut off from me by continual occupation, I should not have delayed so long going to Montargis in order to present myself before your excellency, since you have done me the honor to desire and command me to do so. Above all, I have greatly regretted not having been able to visit your excellency when you were indisposed, in consequence of having been myself seized at that very time with an illness which confined me for several days to the house. Now it appears that the Lord our God looks upon us with a more favorable eye, and will vouchsafe during this springtide to revive the state of our church, which has been, as it were, dead; for it hath pleased the majesty of our king to make so many and such express commands to the people of Orleans to leave us peaceably to enjoy the exercise of our religion in this place, that those people, hitherto so seditious, have begun to grow more gentle, so that we have been able to celebrate the Lord's Supper for two Sundays, with a large company, and I hope that henceforth I may be able sometimes on the Mondays to go to Montargis, to render you the very humble service which I owe you, praying the good God, madame, that fortifying you daily in all bodily and spiritual strength, he may preserve you to a long and very happy life.

“From l'Isle les Orleans, this 15th April, 1572.

“Your excellency's very humble and

“Obedient servant,

“D. TOUSSAIN.”



CHAPTER XIV.

Renée and her daughter, the Duchess of Nemours—The Princess Urbino—Lucrezia d'Este—Leonora d'Este—Last days of Renée.

NOTWITHSTANDING the perplexities that surrounded Renée, affectionate intercourse between herself and her daughter, the Duchess of Nemours, had never been broken. Although Renée was herself obliged to practise the strictest economy in order to permit of a princely hospitality, and was defrauded of her rights and otherwise set aside, her daughter Anna d'Este was always ready to go before the king and his council, and secure by her diligence, as well as through the great influence of her husband's family, more advantageous terms than would otherwise been granted to her mother's claims. The "idol of a court,"

Duchess Anna did not disdain the details of less exalted occupations. At one time, she writes to her mother in behalf of a Monsieur Miron, the seigneur of St. Prest, who owes Renée “a fine for his marriage, and has wished to compound for it with the Sieur Gondy, who makes his demand for it at a very high rate.

“However,” she continues, “the said Miron, fearing lest his lands should be seized, has offered him as much as six hundred livres, which is equal to two fines. And because the said Gondy objects to admit him at that composition, he has betaken himself to me in order to obtain some favor from you, which I very humbly beseech you to grant him, madame, since he and his predecessors have always been your servants, and servants of all our house, and I should like to be able to gratify them in some matter. And you will write, if you please, to the said Sieur Gondy, saying what it is your pleasure that he should do in this matter, which again I request of you very humbly, that the said Miron may know that this letter has been of some use to

him, and that he may have so much the more cause to render you very humble service. From Paris, this 25th June, 1571."

At another time the Duchess of Nemours forwards to Renée a memorial presented to her by a sergeant of Montargis, who threatens a remonstrance to the privy council if his suit be unattended to, and implores her mother to see to it without delay, and to advise her as to the reply to be given, in order that she may obviate any disagreeable consequences that may possibly ensue.

That she did not always limit her interference to matters equally harmless, may not seem so strange. Political intrigue, the baneful companionship of Catherine de' Medici, her own relationship to the Guises, and the deplorable state of the French court and society at that period, had all lent their pernicious influence toward the perversion of the once promising Anna d'Este. Sad it is to contrast what she was with what she became, when years spent in such debasing intercourse had done their work upon her. Faulty as she might be, her letters give us to under-

stand that she was still influenced by filial love and duty, while it is evident Renée clung to her with all a mother's tenderness, such as a child's offences, however aggravated, have seldom power to diminish.

Her second husband, Jacques de Savoy, duke of Nemours, though by no means free from reproach, contrasts favorably with some of the leading men of his party. In 1569 he had been charged, in conjunction with the Duke d'Aumale, to oppose the passage of the Loire by the troops which the Duke de Deux Ponts was leading to the succor of the Huguenots. This enterprise failed through the stubbornness of D'Aumale, and Nemours, fearing that the Guises would throw the whole blame on him, and being also worn out with fatigue, retired to his duchy of Genevois, where he sought distraction from his troubles of body and mind in the cultivation of letters and the fine arts. The correspondence of Renée with the Duke of Nemours leaves no room to doubt the kindly regard entertained by her for her son-in-law. At the close of one of the letters written from Montargis,

the 26th day of June, 1572, we find the following postscript:

“MY SON: I would not forget to tell you, that, if God preserves me in health, I shall very soon be returning to the court, having been invited by the king, and the queen his mother, to the nuptials of madame your niece, and again afterwards at Fontainebleau, where the queen is to be confined, which will be at the time when I assure myself that, if it please God, you will also be there.

“Your good mother,

“RENÉE OF FRANCE.”

From this note the question will arise, Was Renée present at the ill-omened nuptials of Henry of Navarre? Was she doomed to witness the horrors of St. Bartholomew's day in Paris, on the 24th of the same month? The note clearly proves that Renée's speedy return to court was contemplated, and that it depended solely upon the state of her health. If Renée had been then at court, would Anna d'Este have dared to plot with Catherine de' Medici the assassination of her mother's old and trusted friend, the brave Coligni? Could she have risked the sight of her mother's tears? Could she have endured to listen to the condemnation with which that mother

would have denounced such a fearful deed? It is possible, schooled in deceit, and with the fierce blood of Italy flowing in her veins, Anna d'Este had learned to look unshrinkingly upon many things from which she would have turned with horror in her youth. Who would suspect complicity in crime in the author of the following letter?

“TO MADAME, THE DUCHESS DOWAGER OF FERRARA.

“MADAME: Not having had any tidings of you since your arrival at Montargis, I have determined to send you this ‘laquais,’ by whom I very humbly entreat you to write me intelligence of yourself and of your state, also if you have heard anything of monsieur my husband; because, since the time when I was given to understand that he would be setting out on his journey hither, I have had no certain information as to whether he will continue his journey, or whether, indeed, he have deferred it, having heard of what has taken place. I have indeed heard that he set out on the 25th from Chazay, and nothing more. Here things seem to be very peaceable, and no murder is committed, nor act of offence, that I have heard of, continued to be done to any person. And it is hoped that all will go on still better, by means of an ordinance which was yesterday published, whereby the king enjoins upon all the wardsmen of the city to put in writing the names, titles, and

residences of all those who are of 'The Religion,' and to give up to him the lists which shall be made of them, to be placed in the hands of whomsoever his majesty shall please to ordain, with prohibition to injure them or to slander them on pain of death, which edict is only to set them free from prison, and to secure them from heavy fine. I will send you the ordinance as soon as it shall be printed, as I will not fail to do with all other edicts and ordinances which shall be issued hereupon. For the rest, madame, having heard the pleading of your proctor in the court of Parliament, I determined to propose to you Maître Julien Chauveau, who is our proctor, an honest man, and from whom, if it should please you to do him so much favor and honor as to give him your letters of attorney, I will venture to assure that you will have entire satisfaction and service. And I pray you very humbly to believe, that if I did not know him to be worthy of this charge, I would not propose him to you, nor make to you this very humble request; but the knowledge I have of his good will, probity, and diligence, causes me to entreat this very humbly from you, and that it may please you to do me the honor to signify to me your good pleasure hereupon. Madame, with regard to my health, it appears to me that for three nights passed I have had better rest than I have been accustomed to, which has brought me much amendment, and the hope of very soon seeing myself in all health and prosperity, to do you the humble and very affectionate service which I owe to you.

“Madame, I supplicate in this place the Creator to grant you, in perfect health, a very happy and a very long life.

“From Paris, this 11th September, 1572.

“Your very humble and very

“Obedient daughter and servant,

“ANNA D’ESTE.”

“MADAME: I have resolved, seeing that I have no tidings of monsieur, my husband, to send this ‘laquais’ farther on, to bring me back news of him, praying you to send me yours. I have obtained the edict, which I send you, and pray you very humbly to pardon me for not writing to you with my own hand. I have not yet found out how to regain possession of the Sœur de la —; for those who detain her, when they found that we were stirring in the matter, have disclaimed knowledge of her. I send Arragon there every day, and I will do what I can to get her out, and I am deliberating if I can to-day send for the secretary of the Prince Dauphin, and speak to him myself, and then I will advise you of everything. I very humbly kiss your hands.”

History hardly leaves room for doubt that the murder of the venerable Coligni had the sanction of Anna d’Este, and if so, there is something fearful in the serenity, the calm composure in which she writes to her mother. The edict of which she speaks so favorably, was doubtless an artifice of the court, which,

after the massacre of St. Bartholomew, was at a loss how to explain or to justify its barbarous work in the eyes, not alone of France, but of Europe and the whole Christian world. The history of St. Bartholomew's day is too well known to need repetition. If in truth Anna d'Este was one of the perpetrators, she must have felt that a retributive Providence found her out. Later we are told of Henry Duke of Guise, assassinated in the castle of Blois by command of Henry III., who, as Duke of Anjou, had been one of the chief accomplices of Guise in the plot against the lives of Coligni and the Reformed. Then it was that Anna d'Este, when brought prisoner to Blois, after the murder of her sons, the duke and the cardinal, appealed in touching terms to the memory of her mother: "O mother! when your father built these walls, you did not expect that my children would have been hacked to pieces therein!"

That we may know still more of the last days of Renée, we desire to insert another letter, more especially as it brings to our notice the name of Lucrezia, princess of Urbino;

showing that the mother's heart still beat with love and tenderness for her absent daughters. It is directed to Anna, Duchess of Nemours.

“MY DAUGHTER: Having received your letter, and before the letters delivered by this bearer, another which I had from you and my son, Monsieur de Nemours, to which I was intending to send you both presently an answer, M. Franco Novello has returned to me to obtain instructions concerning the manuscript books of my daughter the Princess of Urbino, of which you have often spoken to me. He has employed so much solicitation and research about the matter, that I have spent much time listening to him, and deferred writing to you until I might be able to inform you of all that took place with him, which is, that having been lately in Paris, I caused a minute to be drawn up at Versori's touching the said manuscript books, which I thought at that time to have communicated to you; but your illness and my departure prevented my having the opportunity to do this. Also, I deferred writing, waiting still until the confirmation was passed, that I might not further displace my son, and for the continuance of the good and perfect understanding among you all, my children, such as I know, my daughter, to be your wish. But the solicitation which the said Novello has continued, having in his possession a power of attorney and articles with which he presented me on his return from Paris, has been so great—added to which a packet has come to hand, addressed to him, in

which were letters for him from my said daughter, your sister, and also for me, advising me of what has happened there, which Bellanger will relate to you from me—all which has caused him to redouble his urgency. I have shown to the said Novello the said minute drawn up at Paris, after his having promised me not to speak of it to any one but my said daughter, which minute when he had seen, he was sure that neither my said daughter nor any one in that quarter would be satisfied with it; likewise, that by virtue of his power of attorney and articles which he had in possession, he could not accept it; upon which he drew up one which I could not accept. I delivered him another to take to my said daughter d'Urbino, that she may acquaint me with her opinion of it. I send to you the duplicate of the said minutes and articles, which you can look at and deliberate upon, in order to advise me of what shall seem to be for the best; and whether the consent of my son, your brother, would not be necessary, seeing the concessions that you have both made. For the rest, I experience great regret at the departure of my son, M. de Nemours, and at not having been able to see him here with our son, De Genevois. Concerning the little boy, I have charged the said Bellanger to tell you that if you will send him to me I shall most willingly receive him. I have likewise spoken to him of a plan very necessary for the health of our said grandson, and for my own, should any pestilence or illness occur in this place, and of a certain thing which has already been promised to me.

“My daughter, I have received your letter by the bearer, Bellanger, and the duplicate of my instructions concerning the manuscript books, for which I thank you to the best of my ability, and grieve much for the trouble which the said bearer tells me you have taken. We must cause the said copy to be authenticated in the ‘Chambre des Comptes,’ and when it is authenticated, we must take counsel as to the most ready means of payment which shall present itself, whether by purchase of land or other assignments. It is true that it would be a long time to wait till the king should receive two hundred thousand livres, and the pious and charitable works paid for, and the debts discharged—but also I fear that if they valued an estate at too high a price, I could not satisfy the demands of the creditors. I believe that nothing will be given up by the commissioners on this side [the mountains ?] who will remit the whole to the king, in order to bring the affair to a close, and to come to a decision. I hope to see you soon at Fontainebleau, and to talk to you of what shall be needful for many purposes, concerning which I cannot write to you. And immediately after Easter I will hold myself in readiness to start on my journey thither, when you send me word to do so. Meanwhile I send you the answer to the letters, which my said son M. de Nemours, your husband, has written to me. Intrusting the rest to the said Bellanger, I pray God, my daughter, to give you all the happiness and satisfaction that you can desire.

“From Montargis, this 12th day of March, 1573.”

Lucrezia d'Este, Renée's second daughter, and the one to whom reference has been made, was married at Ferrara, 1571, to Francesco Maria, eldest son and heir of Guido Baldo, duke of Urbino. "The nuptials" are said to have been "celebrated with great splendor, and with chivalric games and other festivities." Her dowry had been prospectively augmented and settled upon her for her sole and separate use, by her mother, but not payable until after the Duchess Renée's decease. Disparity of age and taste rendered this union unhappy, and in little more than two years Lucrezia returned to Ferrara, with a distinct understanding that she was not again to appear at the court of her husband.

At "the elegant court of her brother, Alfonso II.," we are told that Lucrezia "was chiefly distinguished as the promoter and inspirer of literature and music, and as the especial patroness of Tasso."

The youngest daughter of Renée, Leonora d'Este, will ever be remembered in connection with the genius and misfortunes of Torquato Tasso. She was greatly beloved at Ferrara,

and was regarded "as so pure and holy a creature, that the deliverance of that city from an inundation was ascribed to her prayers." Her physical constitution was "delicate," and her manners "quiet and retiring," but she shared with her sister Lucrezia the "stronger qualities of mind;" for we are told that during the absence of her brother Alfonso II., she administered the affairs of government to the complete satisfaction of the people.

Separated from her daughters, Renée participated in all their sorrows, and failed not to make known to them her sympathy and her love. But her life was ebbing away; for years her health had been feeble, and the anxieties of her position, the perplexities consequent on the state of her private affairs, the personal exertions demanded of her, to say nothing of the bitter sorrow at the wrong and injustice of many she loved—all these causes aided in wearing out a body "never strong." Death was not an unwelcome messenger. Her trust was firm and strong; in her youth she had given herself to the Redeemer, and in

her age she felt the strong support, the comfort, the assurance that he was not only able, but willing to save to the uttermost. She died at Montargis, in the sixty-fifth year of her age.

The ambassadors of the Duke of Ferrara notified this event to the Court of Parliament, while to the queen-mother the communication was made by the Duke de Nemours. Catherine did not play the hypocrite; she was serenely indifferent. "The court of Ferrara put on mourning for the dowager-duchess, but did not celebrate her obsequies."

Renée was interred in the church belonging to the Castle of Montargis. More than a century afterwards a local historian writes: "One may there see her armorial bearings and cipher." The arms were those of France and Ferrara; the cipher or device, an R crowned with innumerable fleurs-de-lis on the right and ermines on the left; the legend containing in brief the following words:

"Renée de France, Duchesse de Chartres, Comtesse de Gisors et Dame de Montargis."









LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 019 603 175 3

